

(Figures, dedications, and civilisations)

Figures, dedications, and civilisations

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Figures, dedications, and civilisations

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ESSAY

Figures, dedications, and civilisations

**‘MUSEUM
MONAS’:
CITIZENS’
RESOURCE,
EMPOWERED
CITIZENS**

2

Museum + Sejarah + Nasional (National + History + Museum); this nearly generic cluster of words signals a firm conviction: this is *our* history. As if there were no space, no time, no occasion to question it. To this day, hardly anyone refers to the place by its official name. And yet, it remains one of those sites that are not only compulsory for school visits, but also a steady destination for waves of visitors arriving from across the archipelago. Located in the basement of National Monument (Monas), the museum is almost never empty. Beyond school trips, it is known as a place of pause—a site to rest, to take shelter, to have lunch, even to nap. It was President Sukarno who first named it Museum Sejarah Perjuangan Bangsa (Museum of the History of the Nation’s Struggle).¹ For those who work within the Monas Complex, including the security personnel who rotate through its grounds, it is simply “the museum.” For visitors, it is “Museum Monas”. In this catalogue, let’s call it “Museum Monas”—so it’s easier to attune ourselves to the fact that what it contains are staged reconstructions of historical scenes, presented without the support of artefacts, photographs, videos, archives, or documented sources. And also, so that we are not too startled when we begin to notice that, in one of its historical dioramas, even a painting on the terrace of Sukarno’s house differs from what appears in photographic documentation of the proclamation of independence held in the Indonesian Press Photo Service (IPPHOS) collection.²

The series of *Figures, dedications, and civilisations* exhibitions emerge from a process of conserving the dioramas at the Museum Monas—work that we undertake as, and together with, other members of civil society. This work proceeds without mandate from any institution, not even from Museum Monas itself. We are artists, researchers, writers, historians, former diorama workers, and a group of people who understand history as a shared memory—something living, contested, and transmitted, rather than a completed narrative. (This work began in 2023, p. 31.) These dioramas, with all their shortcomings, biases, and the violences they carry, remain among the few spaces and sites where national history may still be encountered physically—not only as stories, but as objects with scale,

¹ As told by Edhi Sunarso, the sculptor responsible for the production of the historical dioramas at the museum. See: Tom Nicholson with Grace Samboh, "Towards Figures of Dedication, and a Flood (2015)", in *Southeast of Now: Directions in Contemporary and Modern Art in Asia*, vol. 1, no. 1, March 2017 (Singapore: National University of Singapore Press, 2017), p. 223.

² For further notes, see Grace Samboh & Ratna Mufida, 2020. *Edhi Sunarso: Penggubah monumen bangsa*. Jakarta: Seri Pusaka Seni Rupa & Direktorat Jenderal Kebudayaan Kementerian Pendidikan dan Kebudayaan.

surface, and traces of hands that work on them. We believe this conservation work is an effort to sustain the possibility for fellow citizens to continue encountering, questioning, and negotiating the history that took part in shaping us.

The method we adopt is to copy existing forms using equivalent materials.³ This act of copying—or repetition—is not intended to affirm the authority of the past, but to learn through reiteration. By doing this work together, the process of copying each figure reopens questions of how history was once constructed: who is made present, who is erased, how events are translated into visual forms. Copying becomes a way for us to revisit our reading. Our hands do not simply remake these sculptures or figures; they renegotiate their meanings, their contexts, and our own position in relation to them.

Certainly, the history captured in these dioramas is not free from problems, violence, and even certain crimes. Yet we believe that removing these dioramas does not in itself resolve those issues; it merely replaces one erasure with another. For this reason, we choose to confront these dioramas and the historical baggage they carry. As we copy these figures, we speak of the fractures within history, the erasure of figures, neglected crimes, and what remains unseen within the dioramas. These conversations

3 Based on an interview with Edhi Sunarso (February 19, 2015), the material used for the sculpted figures in the dioramas is polyethylene. The same interview also notes that the modelling process was carried out in clay, while the casts were produced in global forms at various scales. This account is supported by the document “Laporan pelaksanaan pengisian diorama Museum Pusat Sejarah ABRI” [Report on the implementation of diorama production at the Central Museum of History of Armed Forces of the Republic of Indonesia (ABRI)] dated July 17, 1975, which states: “The polyethylene raw material for all diorama figures has been prepared and completed in positive form.” Although this reference pertains to a different diorama project, it is reasonable to assume that the materials used for the Museum Monas’ dioramas are the same, given that both were led by Edhi Sunarso, and considering the proximity in production period as well as the materials available at the time. Additional evidence regarding the materials can be found in photographs of the diorama-making process preserved in Edhi Sunarso’s archive, which show artists carving figurative sculptures using tools heated in a furnace. These images corroborate the use of polyethylene, a thermoplastic material that can be shaped through heating. This information is further supported by testimony from Anusapati, who participated in the production of the dioramas at the Vredeburg Fort Museum, describing the processes of assembling and detailing the globally formed casts using polyethylene. The conservation process of *When the flood is over* uses clay for modelling, followed by silicone moulding, and casting in polyester resin. As this conservation effort aims to preserve the figures without risking deformation, the use of silicone moulds and polyester resin ensures greater durability over time. Resin, at room temperature, can endure for more than one hundred years, while silicone moulding allows for the possibility of producing future casts.

are recorded, noted, and become part of the figures sculpted produced through the conservation process. In this way, conservation becomes a form of our effort, as members of civil society, as fellow citizens, to work towards a space that enables us to continue questioning, to remain courageous, open, and accountable.

RECENTLY...

Irian Barat? Irian Jaya? West New Guinea? Nugini Barat? West Irian? Irian? Papua? Papua Barat? Which is correct? For whom? Each name carries entangled contexts, its orbit continuing within an ongoing contest over history. From colonialism to projects of nationalism, from administrative designations to political and cultural identities. From this matter of naming, a certain hesitation emerges in many forms: doubt—if not indifference—over which name to use; interchangeably naming, without realising; even compliance with the official state version without questioning it. It is as if there are unspoken cues to proceed with caution, to weigh each choice carefully. This hesitation, we feel, is also important to acknowledge and to note. It opens a space to continue questioning the history we inherit. It reminds us that what appears simple often holds other layers beneath.

4

We begin this inquiry from a sense of awkwardness and various forms of discomfort. Amid the fanfare surrounding the restoration of the A. A. Maramis Heritage Building, soon to be managed together with Banteng Square⁴, we find even the title of the monument there somewhat unsettling. How are we to speak of the "Liberation of West Irian" when what took place may also be read as conquest? It is like an old song that remains "pleasing" to hear. In 1942, not long after the Japanese defeated the Dutch in Batavia, they removed the bronze statue of Jan Pieterszoon Coen, Governor-General of the Dutch East Indies, from this square as part of their anti-colonial campaign.⁵ Yet were the Japanese not themselves colonising Jakarta? Indonesia? Southeast Asia? The Pacific Islands?

In 1961, President Sukarno commissioned the sculptor Edhi Sunarso to produce the *West Irian Liberation Monument*. Some believe that the figure representing this liberation is J. A.

4 Kementerian Keuangan RI (Ministry of Finance of the Republic of Indonesia), "Tata Integrasi A. A. Maramis dan Lapangan Banteng", July 10, 2025, <https://www.kemenkeu.go.id/informasi-publik/publikasi/berita-utama/tata-integrasi-aamaramis-lapbanteng>, accessed February 26, 2026 .

5 Djawa Eiga Kosha (prod.), *Japanese propaganda film (1941–1945): Het leven tijdens de Japanse bezetting in Indonesië*, video, first published March 1, 1943, reissued by Nederlands Instituut voor Beeld en Geluid (2020) in cooperation with NHK Enterprises, <https://peertube.beeldengeluid.nl/w/9tGzLtudH2gfgX2V6dEXAc>, accessed February 26, 2026.



Removal of the statue of Jan Pieterszoon Coen, Governor-General of the Dutch East Indies, at Banteng Square (formerly Waterlooplein) on March 7, 1943. Screenshot from *Japanse propagandafilm (1941–1945): Het leven tijdens de Japanse bezetting in Indonesië* by Djawa Eiga Kosha, Nederlands Instituut voor Beeld en Geluid, and NHK Enterprises.

Dimara, one of Indonesia's national heroes from Papua. At Griya Seni Hj. Kustiyah Edhi Sunarso, there is a photograph of Sukarno demonstrating the pose of the sculpture: releasing the chains that bind his hands, raising both arms with an expression of relief—filled with yearning and deeply moved. In various interviews and personal notes, Edhi Sunarso affirmed that the figures in these three monuments are ordinary people; like himself, like me, like most of us. For Sukarno, what mattered most was the precision of expression. For this reason, Edhi Sunarso often used his own face as reference, to ensure that the expressions he carved truly captured those of the people. Therefore, was the model J. A. Dimara? Edhi Sunarso? Sukarno? Or, perhaps, it doesn't matter who he was, since in essence, he has always been us—the people?⁶

6 Based on information from Margaretha Rumbiak Msen, Sukarno identified the figure in the *West Irian Liberation Monument* as J. A. Dimara; see Carmelia Sukmawati, *Fa ido ma, ma ido fa: J. A. Dimara, lintas perjuangan putra Papua* (Jakarta: Sakanindo Printama, 2000), p. 146. The account that Sukarno personally demonstrated how the sculpture should be made derives from an audio recording of Edhi Sunarso, June 18, 2009, transcribed by Antonius Fajar Riyanto, archive of Griya Seni Hj. Kustiyah Edhi Sunarso. Regarding the expressions of the figures in these monuments, Edhi Sunarso often refer to his own face; see Mikke Susanto (ed.), *Edhi Sunarso: Seniman Pejuang [Edhi Sunarso: Artist-Fighter]* (Yogyakarta: PT Hasta Kreatifa Manunggal, 2010), p. 62.

In 2016, Jakarta Governor Basuki Tjahaja Purnama initiated the revitalisation of Banteng Square with an emphasis on the *West Irian Liberation Monument* alongside facilities for public activities and sport. As he put it, “A monument that was made as a reminder that the nation of Indonesia once triumphed over the West and its allies!”⁷ This revitalisation project, valued at 77 billion rupiah ($\pm$ 5,5 million USD), was inaugurated in 2018, the same year in which the administration of Joko Widodo and Ma’ruf Amin assumed majority ownership of PT Freeport Indonesia and extended mining operations in Papua until 2041.⁸ When President Joko Widodo announced a new governance of Papua through a ‘Pendekatan Kesejahteraan’ (Welfare Approach), replacing the ‘Pendekatan Keamanan-Ketahanan’ (Security-Resilience Approach) that had been in place since the New Order, that old song began to echo once more...

Liberation? Conquest? Security-Resilience? Welfare? Of whom? Us? The Government of Indonesia? The Military? Papuans? Indonesians? At the level of the state, are Papuans not Indonesians? These questions quickly bring us to the problem of position—how to speak of this phenomenon as Indonesians without pretending to understand, without speaking on behalf of others, and without detaching ourselves from the history that shapes how we see it. Even the casual use of the pronoun *kita* (inclusive we), rather than *saya* (I/me), in everyday Javanese warrants suspicion. *Kita* is never neutral; it carries the legacy of national education, state propaganda, and an imagination of the archipelago that has shaped our ways of knowing. From linguistic hesitation, a hesitation in position soon follows. Avoiding the use of *kita* does not necessarily free us; it may instead place us as though we were outside history. For this reason, the most reasonable position is to acknowledge complicity: to accept that this uncertainty is not something to be resolved, but a point of departure for working with diorama no. 44, and that the diorama is not merely a political artefact, but a space that reveals how national history is formed, and who may be left out of it.

THAT DIORAMA

This outdoor ceremonial scene is arranged within a space resembling a shallow stage. Just like a near-perfect dome, its surface curves to form a horizon without sharp edges, creating

7 Basuki Tjahaja Purnama (@basukibtp), Instagram post on the *West Irian Liberation Monument* at Banteng Square, July 23, 2018, <https://www.instagram.com/p/BlkxVZSBf3G/>, accessed March 5, 2026.

8 Anitana Widya Puspa, “PT Freeport Indonesia kantongi IUPK, operasi tambang lanjut hingga 2041,” *Bisnis.com*, December 21, 2018, <https://ekonomi.bisnis.com/read/20181221/44/872057/freeport-indonesia-kantongi-iupk-operasi-tambang-lanjut-hingga-2041>, accessed March 5, 2026.



Diorama no. 44 "Liberation of Irian Jaya, 1 May 1963," at the Museum Monas. Photo by Ary "Jimged" Sendy, courtesy of Griya Seni Hj. Kustiyah Edhi Sunarso and Hyphen—.

a sense of spatial continuity. What stands before us is not the event itself, but a reconstruction of the scene in the form of a diorama. Its spatial arrangement brings together sculpted figures, constructed architectural elements, and a painted backdrop that merge with the surface of the space.

7

We can observe a transition across dimensions within this diorama—from sculptural form (three-dimensional), to relief (three-dimensional forms attached to a largely flat surface), and finally to painting (two-dimensional) as its backdrop. Sculpted figures dominate the foreground, while farther toward the back, architectural elements and landscape shift into painted form. This transition is so seamless that the eye can scarcely register the boundary between the bodily and the pictorial.

The space is arranged symmetrically along a central axis. A rectangular stage sits at the far end of the dome, directly aligned with the point from which the central axis extends. In an instant, the stage becomes the focal point of the scene. In front of it, two flagpoles stand prominently, as if framing an assertion for the stage's presence. Beneath the pole which flies the flag of Indonesia, stand two women in uniform as flag bearers.⁹ Beneath the other pole, which flies the United Nations flag, stand two Pakistani soldiers.¹⁰ At the centre of the stage stands a figure in a suit and sunglasses, positioned before several loudspeakers, reading from an open folder held with both hands. Another stands beside him, holding an umbrella over his head. On the stage are two other men in suits, a young woman in a kebaya, and two empty chairs. Behind the

9 *Draaiboek* "Trikora dan/atau kembalinya Irian Barat", cited in *Laporan lengkap lukisan sejarah visual Museum Sejarah Tugu Nasional, Bagian IV Hasil Penelitian, C. Menuju Sosialisme Indonesia*, Panitia Museum Sejarah Tugu Nasional, August 1, 1964, p. 345.

10 *Ibid.*



Ceremony for the transfer of authority over West Irian from the United Nations to Indonesia, May 1, 1963, in Kotabaru. Courtesy of UN Photo.

8

stage, and to its left and right, still near the central axis of the dome, are numerous figures, seated and standing. Those not in military uniform, or part of the flag-bearing unit, appear as officials or civil servants—wearing blazers or suits.

At the front, on both the left and right, are groups of figures standing apart from the stage. Dressed in casual attire, some of these figures raise their arms. The skin tones of the figures in this area appear darker than those on and around the stage. The figures are rendered in a realist manner. Facial individualisation is limited, while distinctions of role are conveyed primarily through clothing and attributes. Titled "Liberation of Irian Jaya, 1 May 1963", this diorama is one of 51 historical scenes presented in Museum Monas.¹¹

Now, let us turn to Kotabaru, May 1, 1963, the day on which the event depicted in diorama no. 44 took place. The United Nations circulated a black-and-white photograph under the title Transfer of authority over West Irian (West New Guinea) is completed, accompanied by the following brief caption:

11 In the book *Monumen Nasional: Monumen Keagungan Perjuangan Bangsa Indonesia* [National Monument: Monument to the Greatness of the Indonesian Nation's Struggle], the description of the diorama is limited to a single paragraph: "This diorama depicts Sudjarwo Tjondronegoro representing Indonesia at the official ceremony marking the transfer of sovereignty over Irian to the Republic of Indonesia on May 1, 1963 in Jayapura. The Dutch flag was lowered and the Indonesian flag was raised." Ekki Husein Katili et al., *Monumen Nasional: Monumen Keagungan Perjuangan Bangsa Indonesia* (Jakarta: Kantor Pengelola Monumen Nasional, Pemda DKI Jakarta, 1997), p. 88.



(Left to right) Dr Hurustiati (Chair of KOWANI [Indonesian Women's Congress] and wife of the First Deputy Prime Minister); Rusiah Sardjono (Minister of Social Affairs); Tatiek Azis Saleh (wife of the Minister of People's Industry); Laksmiharti Tjondronegoro (wife of the Indonesian representative in West Irian). *Photograph from Indonesia, Vol. IV: Looking Back over 1964* (Jakarta: Departemen Luar Negeri Republik Indonesia, 1964). Collection of Bart Bookelmann, via Indonesia Tempo Dulu (Facebook) and Indonesia Tempo Doeloe (Instagram).

At a ceremony held at the main square in Kotabaru today, authority over West Irian (West New Guinea) was transferred from the United Nations to Indonesia after a seven-month period of international administration.

A view of a section of the main square as the blue and white flag (left) of the United Nations was lowered at 12:30 p.m., leaving the Indonesian colours of red and white as the only flag flying throughout the territory.

From this photograph, we can see the site of the ceremony, set against a hillside and a building. People stand, some in salute or at attention, while others appear seated. An officer is seen holding the halyard of the United Nations flag, which is positioned at half-mast. Meanwhile, the flag of Indonesia is seen flying, attended by two women from the Indonesian Navy Women's Corps (Korps Wanita Angkatan Laut/KOWAL), one of whom is named Louise Elisabeth Coldenhoff.¹²

The ceremonial stage has two levels, with its central section set slightly higher. Standing upon it are Subandrio, Djalal Abdoh, C. V. Narasimhan, and Sudjarwo

¹² M. Rizal Maslan, "Tentara Wanita Pengibar Merah Putih di Hollandia", *Detik*, January 6, 2021, <https://news.detik.com/x/detail/intermeso/20220106/Tentara-Wanita-Pengibar-Merah-Putih-di-Hollandia/>, accessed March 5, 2026.

Tjondronegoro, accompanied by two aides holding umbrellas behind those four figures. Also visible on the stage is a woman standing slightly behind Sudjarwo. She wears a kebaya and a shawl, her hair styled in a bun. At the time of writing, we have yet to identify her. This photograph covers a fairly wide area. In the front row, we can see several foreign representatives. Also visible are two women seated and one woman standing. All three wear kebaya and have their hair styled in buns. One of them wears sunglasses.

There is also that colour photograph showing women in kebaya and jarik, in vivid hues, seated to the left of the stage during the ceremony marking the transfer of authority over West Irian on May 1, 1963. An aide in uniform, along with another in a suit, holds umbrellas over them. They appear shaded, protected from the heat, as if affirming their importance within the ceremony. At Monas, this scene is reconstructed in diorama form. Yet among all these figures, only a single woman in kebaya is visible—a young woman at the far left of the stage, holding a folder. Where are the women, most of whom wore sunglasses? Who were they? Why have their traces been completely erased in the version of history frozen in the diorama? The absence of women, figures who actually attended the ceremony, is not confined to the diorama. They are also absent from the writing of national history. This, in turn, deepens our curiosity about their lives, their dedications, and the forms of work they carried out.

Is there a place for failures, mistakes, anxieties, or such, in history? It is said that history is written by the victors. If the winner can't write, then it most likely would hire writers, artists, film directors, etc. to write it for them. Can these 'writers' free themselves from their subjectivities? Do they simply do what is being ordered, commissioned to them? For whom are these histories written for? In the case of national histories, we assume that it is for the people. But who are the people? And, is it, really, for them? Who else if not them? Perhaps for the state? For power itself? Or, for the future as imagined by the victors? Rarely, if ever, is history written for those who have truly lived it.

THE FIGURES

How should we understand Supeni today? She who was dubbed “Irian Lady” for her diplomacy in advocating for West Irian’s independence at the 1955 Asian-African Conference¹³, and for her involvement in the governing body of the Irian Bureau, which was formed specifically to return West Irian into the territory

13 Paul Tista *Supeni Wanita Utusan Negara* (Jakarta: PT Pembimbing Masa, 1989), p. 132-134.

of the Republic of Indonesia?¹⁴ There is Dr Hurustiati, who often voiced her concern for our brothers and sisters in Papua. She criticised the Dutch for allowing West Irian to remain in a condition of backwardness and believed that Indonesia could become an agent of liberation that would bring progress to them.¹⁵ Hurustiati, who frequently appeared in various international conferences, also took part in advocating for West Irian at the Asian–African Women’s Conference in 1958 together with Maria Ulfah.¹⁶ Ita Fatia Nadia emphasises that these efforts of liberation and voicing of the colonised within the Indonesian women’s movement after independence were grounded in a spirit of anti-colonialism and anti-imperialism. Fransisca Fanggalaj, too, had already articulated a similar spirit since the Southeast Asian Youth Conference in 1948, which later became an embryo of the Asian-African Conference in 1955.¹⁷

How does each of these figures represent a nation, and in their struggle for sovereignty—crossing national borders with a spirit of solidarity among nations?

The staging of scenes in dioramas at Museum Monas rests upon a historical narrative in the version of those in power, and a visual rendering of the artists who made them. As part of the data-gathering process, the sculptor responsible for the making of these historical dioramas, Edhi Sunarso, undertook a long journey to Papua to capture the landscape and ambience for the events he sought to render. This journey was far from easy. Edhi Sunarso recounts:

For example, Digul! I had to go there. At the time, there was no big aeroplane to get there. I had to fly to Sentani, and from Sentani to Tanah Merah we had to take the flight five times. When we could not pass over the mountains, there were only slopes. Once, we got into the slopes and it got dark. The following day, we would try again ... It was the fifth day that we finally reached Tanah Merah. From there, how do you think we reached Digul? There was no asphalt road. We had to walk through the forest with ropes ... When we finally arrived, there was nothing there. It was just forest.¹⁸

For Edhi Sunarso, the journey was his dedication to the republic that he joined in the struggle for independence through guerrilla warfare against the Dutch. Beyond the difficulty of reaching such remote landscapes, he faced an equally complex task: visually reconstructing the place of exile where the republic’s founders had been detained in Boven Digul, a site that had long been reclaimed by the jungle. To obtain

14 Supeni is listed as a member of the governing body under the name Mrs. Pudjobuntoro. Presidential Decree of the Republic of Indonesia No. 201 of 1953 concerning the establishment of the Irian Bureau. Accessed through The National Archives of Indonesia (ANRI).

15 Tjiptoning, “Nj. Dokter Hurustiati Subandrio”, in *Minggu pagi*, March 31, 1963, p. 4.

16 Ayu Wulandari, “Menjadi Istri Diplomat: Hurustiati Soebandrio dalam Membentuk Citra Indonesia di Inggris 1947-1954,” *Handep: Journal of History and Culture*, vol. 5, no. 1, December 2021, p. 10.

17 Ita Fatia Nadia, “Jaringan Fransisca Fanggalaj dalam Gerakan Perempuan Internasional”, *Tempo*, December 13, 2024, <https://www.tempo.co/arsip/gerakan-perempuan-fransisca-fanggalaj-1181185>, accessed February 26, 2026.

18 Tom Nicholson with Grace Samboh, “Towards Figures of Dedication, and a Flood (2015)”, in *Southeast of Now: Directions in Contemporary and Modern Art in Asia*, vol. 1, no. 1, March 2017 (Singapore: National University of Singapore Press, 2017), p. 223-224

accurate data, he sought out those who still had collective memory of the camp where those deemed “dangerous” by the colonial regime were imprisoned for igniting the spirit of independence. From their stories, Edhi Sunarso began to piece together its form—sketch by sketch, correction by correction—until, at last, one local informant said, “Yes, that is how it was.”

Fraught with obstacles and reliant on memories of the people he encountered, Edhi Sunarso’s journey reveals something rarely acknowledged in projects regarding visualisation of history: that every attempt to “re-present” an event emerges from a condition of limitation. He set out carrying incomplete sketches and partial accounts, and was then tasked with rendering them into visual form—one that, inevitably, must appear definite and convincing. It is precisely at this point that the work of the diorama exposes its paradox. These dioramas are taken to represent particular historical events, yet they are built from fragments, conjectures, and the interpretive acts of artists who strive to synthesise collective memory, the will of the state, and their own sensibilities as experts who are also citizens.

Edhi Sunarso’s experience is not the only way to understand how these dioramas are made, maintained, and read. In our conversations with sculptors who were involved at different moments, other layers began to emerge—of learning, of precision, and also of how history is shaped by interests. From here, Monas does not appear as a single, unified voice, but rather as a field that is continually negotiated, contested. For Mon Mudjiman, a student who was involved in the process of making the dioramas, this work is a space for learning without being entirely taught:

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You know, for Monas, Pak Edhi also shared [the work] with his colleagues. Those who were considered capable would take on coordinating roles, supporting the work. All of them were graduates of ASRI. We students simply went along with it, because we learn. We learnt in two ways. We learnt for school [as this was part of the curriculum], meaning, as students. And, we also learnt directly [...] by working. I think, at the time, we simply enjoyed it. Working, gathering together, just as we’re doing here. As students, we take notes with our ears, recording through listening. Because conversations like that were not scheduled. So, it also helped us. Another kind of knowledge. If we were working on our own, we would not have got far.

I happened to be assigned [the diorama of] the Diponegoro War. [...] In the second year, we hadn’t even gotten to animal anatomy yet, like horses or such things. Not yet. In the Diponegoro War scene, there were seventeen horses that I had to make. Zero! I had no knowledge of how to sculpt a horse. It became a kind of indirect challenge. Our instinct, then, was to find things out on our own. Go to the horse stables, and see. Oh, so this is what horses are like! Visually, we took it in. In today’s terms, perhaps, I was somewhat recording it. When difficulties arise, well, we go looking. How does it move? What are the proportions? Yes, we keep looking ... So, with each obstacle in carrying out work, we look [for solutions]. No one told us to. Not even Pak Edhi. This was

not based on instruction or teaching.¹⁹

As for Ari Sutondo, who later became involved in the arrangement and restoration, precision became something that had to be maintained:

[At first,] I worked under Pak Edhi. Later, I was given the trust as an assistant during the final setting on site. He was so meticulous! Sometimes I would, say, help. As in, “Let me help to install things first, sir.” I would have tried to adjust the dolls’ position according to the design. After they’re installed, Pak Edhi would take a look and say, “Ri, Ri, go up there again.” “Yes, sir?” “That one, Ri! Not enough... Its angle is off by a few degrees...” Even just a few degrees, he could perceive it. [...] Because it happened so often, I came to realise that I was still very far from reaching Pak Edhi’s level of precision. That is why, once it was declared okay by Pak Edhi, that’s what I try to uphold, to maintain.

[In the process of restoration, later on,] when it came to repainting the dolls, I would make a mark whenever I lift one: this is doll number such-and-such, which direction the feet are facing, so that nothing would shift even slightly. [...] It may not be immediately visible, but it is precisely these forms of precision that I try to uphold. So, until recently, when installing this—even in restoration—I would photograph even the traces. [...] This base, as wide as it is, [consists] of several fragments of photographs. The positions of the dolls [I marked] with numbers. And that is what I enforced on those working under me to uphold.²⁰

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On the other hand, the renowned sculptor and curriculum developer at Institut Seni Indonesia (formerly ASRI), Anusapati reminds us that dioramas are never free from larger interests:

Diorama is a depiction that is, in itself, an interpretation. Therefore, there are, of course, external factors that are also involved in that visualisation. For instance, those who hold authority, such as the government at a certain time when the dioramas are made. That government certainly had particular perspectives, particular interests—perhaps political, and so on—that shaped the scenes depicted in the diorama.

For example, depiction of the PKI rebellion (PKI, Partai Komunis Indonesia, or the Indonesian Communist Party). The Monas dioramas were made in the early years of the New Order. [Those dioramas, which we still see today,] were an effort by the government, or the authorities at the time, to depict the event according to their perspective. These facts can, over time, become problematic. Now, years later, perhaps it can be debated: was it really as shown? So, indeed, it is a complex matter, where dioramas, as a

19 Documentation of Mon Mudjiman’s presentation at the workshop on sculpting figures of the Museum Monas’ diorama no. 32, “The Proclamation, 17 August 1945,” held at Griya Seni Hj. Kustiyah Edhi Sunarso, September 27, 2023.

20 Interview with Ari Sutondo at Griya Seni Hj. Kustiyah Edhi Sunarso, February 13 2025.

documentation of an event, may contain distortions of the very facts it seeks to present.²¹

Such limitations are important to acknowledge, for they remind us that history never appears as something whole, complete, and certain. Even as figures in a diorama stand firmly, the certainty they project emerges from a fragile process. It is from these fragments that the image of the state is assembled, and from these same fragments that we begin to see the early cracks in the story of the liberation of West Irian. Cracks that open up space for other readings, for questions that remain unresolved.

WE FIGURE ...

Immediately after the transfer of administration to the UNTEA, the UNTEA will widely publicize and explain the terms of the present Agreement, and will inform the population concerning the transfer of administration to Indonesia and the provisions for the act of self-determination as set out in the present Agreement.

— Article X, the New York Agreement, 1962

Looking at the reality of Papua today, has Indonesia's agenda for "the liberation of West Irian" truly been fulfilled? How is it possible that not a single Papuan spoke on the podium on that day? Not even Eliezer Jan Bonay, the first Papuan who was later appointed as governor under the Republic of Indonesia. Nor the Papuan representatives who welcomed the Indonesian delegation at Kotabaru airfield. What is recorded in the diorama, too, raises an eyebrow: those on the stage, and those seated or standing nearby if they are not in uniform—thus from outside Papua—are dressed in suits or wearing blazers—thus officials, also from outside Papua. A handful of figures in everyday (casual) clothing turn their backs to us, raising their hands toward the crowd around the stage—whether in protest or in encouragement, we cannot be certain, as their facial expressions remain unseen.

At the Investigating Committee for Preparatory Work for Independence (BPUPK) session on July 11, 1945, the debate over West Irian converged on the arguments put forward by Sukarno and Mohammad Yamin, who argued that a nation is not determined by race, but by its historical experience. Historian JJ Rizal notes that Sukarno's insistence on including West Irian cannot be separated from his relationship with Shigetada Nishijima, a staff member of Imperial Japanese Navy Officer Admiral Tadashi Maeda, who conveyed Japan's geopolitical

21 Documentation of Anusapati's presentation at the workshop on sculpting figures of the Museum Monas' diorama no. 44, "Liberation of Irian Jaya, 1 May 1963," held at Griya Seni Hj. Kustiyah Edhi Sunarso, February 10, 2025.

concerns without disclosing the full extent of the information that Japan possessed. Following this reading, there is a layer of knowledge that remains absent—namely, the discovery of large gold deposits in West Irian since 1936, which in fact drew the attention of both Japan and the Dutch.²² If such information about gold lay beyond Sukarno's reach, where did this decision come from? Was the impulse to include West Irian truly closer to an imagination of unity than to an ambition over natural wealth?

President Sukarno may have envisioned prosperity for his brothers and sisters in West Irian. Prosperity for all citizens of Indonesia, from Sabang to Merauke. Yet history took another turn. Less than three years after the ceremony of administrative transfer from United Nations Temporary Executive Authority (UNTEA) to the Republic of Indonesia, Sukarno's power was overthrown and replaced by the New Order regime. In the hands of Soeharto, the spirit of liberation shifted into the language of development and the imperative to safeguard the unity of the Republic. The aspiration of liberation was replaced by conquest, the extraction of natural resources, the marginalisation of settler communities, among others. The promise of progress and prosperity gave way to stabilisation operations and technocratic policies that were deaf to the voices of the people.²³

Reflecting on Edhi Sunarso's journey to Digul, we begin to see how those in power—based in Java—came to perceive West Irian: as a distant frontier of wilderness, untamed and fraught with obstacles. Yet at the same time, this wilderness was also understood to hold the promise of abundant natural wealth. For many Javanese, Papua appeared as a *terra incognita*—a foreign horizon, distant and enigmatic, yet precisely for that reason deemed highly valuable. This perception would later converge with the developmental imagination of the following era, when extractivism—the idea that natural resources must be exploited, extracted, and integrated into the project of national progress—became a foundational principle of state policy.

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At the summit of Monas, the flame that symbolises the spirit of the people's struggle gleams through the patronage of a wealthy benefactor. Teuku Markam, an entrepreneur from Aceh, donated 28 kilograms of gold to gild the massive bronze structure. It was not a contribution from the people, nor the outcome of collective *gotong royong* aligned with the regime's ideals, but rather an expression of elite belief in the necessity of state symbols, as Veronika Kusumaryati observes. This gold stands as both evidence and witness: that monumentality—along with its need for markers and symbols—emerges from the convergence of power and wealth, rather than from

22 Documentation of JJ Rizal's presentation at the workshop on sculpting figures of the Museum Monas' diorama no. 44, "Liberation of Irian Jaya, 1 May 1963," held at Griya Seni Hj. Kustiyah Edhi Sunarso, February 9, 2025.

23 A long list of development legacies from the New Order era—from the Freeport Contract of Work (1967), transmigration (1964–1999), Operation Koteka (1970s), and the designation of Military Operations Areas (DOM), to policies in the post-Reformasi period such as the Merauke Integrated Food and Energy Estate (MIFEE, 2008) and the Trans-Papua road (2020–2024)—has, in fact, marginalized Papuan communities, eroded their identities, and inscribed memories of violence that continue to be reproduced across generations. For more in-depth reading of these problematic development policies in Papua, see I Nyoman Sudira, Cahyo Pamungkas, Fachri Aidulsyah, Elvira Rumkabu, and Yuliana Langowuyo, *Pembangunan, Marginalisasi, dan Disintegrasi Papua* (Jakarta: IMPARSIAL The Indonesian Human Rights Monitor, 2020).

the needs of the people. Ironically, only a few years after Monas was erected, another, far greater amount of gold began to be extracted in Papua.²⁴ If the gold of Monas affirmed Sukarno, the gold of Grasberg—first explored by the Dutch, later fully controlled by the New Order regime and the United States²⁵—became a pillar of Soeharto's rule.²⁶ From the gifted gold of Aceh to the mined gold of Papua, it becomes clear how the same material sustains both the symbols and the stability of power across different moments in time.

When the gold of Monas and the gold of Grasberg reveal how the state constructs its symbols from extracted materials—whether through relations of patronage or from the depths of the earth—the question then becomes: how do we, as citizens, confront such a legacy today? Monuments and dioramas that we inherit are not merely aesthetic objects or artefacts of the past, but structures that shape how we read history. Thus, every attempt to preserve, handle, or rework these dioramas becomes more than a matter of technical conservation. It is an effort to reopen questions that have been tightly sealed by the symbols of the state: who has the right to remember, who has the right to speak, and what forms collective memory might take when history has already sanctioned the ways in which we see it.

16

LET'S FIGURE IT OUT TOGETHER

In this catalogue (p. 118-133) is a map packed with lines that connect places on this earth. This map visualises links, ties, and tangled threads between thoughts and concerns of people—of figures—that haunt and take part in the different manifestations of this exhibition. The presence of this map in different shapes and scales at each of the exhibition spaces introduces us to the works around them, expanding the horizons of each work. Some works depart from questions about value—how a certain material, body, or form becomes valuable, and what history shapes those values. Likewise, are the exhibition spaces of Figures, dedications, and civilisations. They contain works that threads through the fractures of history which are visible through at least three layers of readings. The first layer concerns matters of structure, material, and value: how materials, objects, and figures acquire meaning, and how that meaning may shift when placed in different relationships. In the second layer,

24 Documentation of Veronika Kusumaryati's presentation at the workshop on sculpting figures of the Museum Monas' diorama no. 44, "Liberation of Irian Jaya, 1 May 1963," held at Griya Seni Hj. Kustiyah Edhi Sunarso, February 13, 2025.

25 See "Kontrak Karya (Contract of Work/CoW), 1967" in point no. 6, *Map & legend*, see p. 120.

26 Documentation of Veronika Kusumaryati's presentation, *ibid.*

various forms of presence make the past not entirely separate from the present, but something that continues to resonate within space and experience. The third layer concerns the practices through which things are recorded, copied, preserved, studied, and made present again. Neither of these three layers stands on their own. On the contrary, they penetrate through each other.

First, history not as a sequence of past events, but a structure that keeps working—sometimes it works hard, and at times it is hardly noticed. The wooden logs that Anusapati made out of bronze are examples of this (p. 76). In massive amounts, we call these logs *timber*, an extractive commodity sourced from forests. Bronze, a material closely tied to monuments and durability, historically precedes gold—such as the case for the Monas summit, and is often chosen for its “long life” and prestige. By transforming wood into bronze, this work applies the logic of extraction into the language of monumentalism—a shift that impels us to return to how values are attached to materials.

Titarubi works by inverting scale and accumulation (p. 50). Nutmeg seeds from Banda and Roen—a commodity that once ignited wars, occupations, and colonial violence—are layered with gold using a technology she developed on her own. Nutmeg is presented one by one, its individuality emphasised like pieces of jewellery—so that its value is no longer based on quantity and territorial conquest, but on singularity and care. Kinez Reza puts a fragment of dinosaur bone, a precious stone, and a piece of leaf on equal footing (p. 75). Materials that are considered by the market economy as rare and expensive stand together with the frail and ordinary. Their value is not differentiated by geological or market categorisation, but by arrangement and presence. Nasikin chose paper pulp—a testing material for sculptors, usually Ahmad thrown away after the modelling phase is done—as final form (p. 79). Pulp is made of paper that is sourced from cement packaging, the residue of a construction material that is also borne out of extraction. Here, a medium that typically serves as a place for writing and notation of history, no longer carries the narrative, it becomes the body itself.

In Emiria Sunassa, the shift in value occurs through the choice of figures. She presents non-Javanese bodies—farmer, hunter, newlyweds—in landscapes that are not the centre (p. 48, 55, & 107). At a time when Java was increasingly positioned as the cultural axis, this choice shifts attention from centre to periphery, from icon to everyday life. Also in Sriyani (p. 106 & 110-113), her works in this exhibition present people—figures—



Museum Monas dioramas in the making, c. 1964-1972. Scanned and archived from the collection of Griya Seni Hj. Kustiyah Edhi Sunarso by Hyphen—.

18 from her circle in everyday life. Half of the works are monotype on papers that she made herself. Here, value not only exists in the figures that she drew, but also in the planes that made their presence possible. Planes and surfaces are not neutral backgrounds, they are the work of the artist's hands. Value here does not move abstractly; it shifts through the bronze that replaces wood, through the nutmeg seed layered with gold, through the paper pulp that is usually thrown away.

The black-and-white photo above shows artists who are busy doing work. We came across this photo in an album labelled with Edhi Sunarso's handwriting: *Pembuatan diorama Monas* [The making of Monas dioramas]²⁷. At the far right of the photo's background, several people are gathering around something. Though indistinct, other photographs in the same album allow us to identify the space where they are crouching as a simulation site for the arrangement of figures within a diorama. That nook on the studio wall is floored with a semicircle board. On top of this board, the three people are arranging small figures according to a sketch that has been approved by a team of historians who are responsible for staging of historical scenes that will be frozen in diorama form at Museum Monas.

Four sculptors are seen working on figures that differ in scale. Some look smaller

²⁷ There is no date that accompanies this caption. According to Edhi Sunarso, President Sukarno first invited him to join this project not long after the inauguration ceremony of *Monumen Pembebasan Irian Barat*, 17 Agustus 1963 [West Irian Liberation Monument, 17 August 1963]. (See Tom Nicholson with Grace Samboh, "Towards Figures of Dedication, and a Flood", *ibid*, p. 223-224.) The front cover of the script for diorama construction and scene directions shows the printed date: 1964. We can therefore assume that the work on these figures took place between the years 1964 (circa) and 1977 (when the Museum Monas opened to the public).



Sculpting figures for the conservation of Museum Monas' diorama no. 44 "Liberation of Irian Jaya, 1 May 1963" at Griya Seni Hj. Kustiyah Edhi Sunarso, February 8–15, 2025.
Photo by M. Revaldi Nur Putra, courtesy of Hyphen—.

than a Barbie™, others look much bigger than most Marvel™ action figures. Two of them are holding a long wooden carving tool, adding details on figures that look taller than a piece of A4 paper. The tool on the female sculptor's hand is too small for us to recognise, but it is obvious that her figure is only slightly bigger than its sculptor's fist. Another person is wearing a sleeveless shirt, facing away from the camera. It is fair to assume that he is also working on a small figure as his head and shoulders are hunched over. Scattered on the table board are sculpted figures in various scales that appeared almost white due to the camera flash.

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These boards are made from industrially processed wood. They are fabricated from thin layers of wood that are woven and glued to form a single plane. They don't come from a single log, but rather from pieces that work together to form a new strength. Construction workers and building supply stores call this material plywood.

Meanwhile the above photo shows the ambience of diorama no. 44 workshop at a place that was once Edhi Sunarso's sculpture studio. Since the beginning, all the tables in this studio have had their legs made with various scrap materials—be it pieces of metals, aluminium, even wood joints. Whereas their surfaces use plywood—a material that, though flat and rigid, is highly versatile in terms of use and is closely associated with the impression of "always ready to be reassembled." The people sitting around this table appear to be conversing while they work. Some are sculpting figures, some are checking their laptops while showing images. Two cameras focus on the group of people sitting around the table. The one on the right is recording, while the one on the left is ready to take over. On the left, a microphone appears to be pointing at the centre of the table. Their work and conversation are recorded both in audio and visual form. There is a stone sculpture next to the camera on the right. And in the middle of the

table is a wooden anatomical model. Around the table, there are several clay sculptures of various sizes, sculpting tools, and stacks of photographs. On the floor, several bags of clay can be seen in between the legs of the chairs. In one corner of the table, a flat screen displays a photo of four women sitting. A person is also seen standing next to a television, facing another table with files and books on it.

This place that was once called a studio by Edhi Sunarso is where we do the conservation work of dioramas in Museum Monas together. Today, we acknowledge the place as Griya Seni Hj. Kustiyah Edhi Sunarso (in English, literally, it means: House of Art of Kustiyah Edhi Sunarso)—a place where works and archives of Edhi Sunarso and Kustiyah are exhibited and kept. From Edhi Sunarso's archive of his commissioned works (be it reliefs, monuments, or dioramas), we learn how history "is written", or, more precisely, designed—through scales, positions, and gestures. At the same time, from Kustiyah's archive, we question our perspective on what is called history. If history is filled with important figures and events, who has the right to decide on which are deemed as important? (And, which are deemed as not?) How is it possible that someone who has kept making and exhibiting work for five decades cannot be read in art history books? Is she erased from history? Who erased her? Why? Isn't the erasure of figures a form of violence?

The second layer threads the presence of history as a condition that is still working (within bodies, spaces, sounds, and encounters), not as a thing of the past or a scene that is over. Titarubi's nutmeg seed, for instance, recalls the history of colonial conquest and violence (p. 50) not by reconstructing war scenes. She presents the seed as a single object that can be observed from close proximity. Violence is present as a historical background that is attached to an object, not as a spectacle. Tom Nicholson brings together contexts that are geographically distant but similar in their experiences of occupation and erasure (p. 101). Rather than equating events, Tom opens up comparison as a way of rereading how monuments work—what is affirmed, what is omitted.

Uji Handoko Eko Saputro (Hahan) draws us into The Order of Eleventh March (Surat Perintah 11 Maret, 1966, colloquially known as Supersemar). He does not place this affair as merely an event of the past (p. 103), but as a turning point that still shapes the way we live today. History here isn't "far away", it surrounds us. Julia Sarisetiati and Ary "Jimged" Sendy recorded a film at a port where slaves were once forced to

depart, and linked them with experiences of migrant workers from Indonesia today (p. 80). They gather those who were once migrant workers to listen and learn together—how the songs still resonate today. Violence is not present as distant archives, but as echoes that still reverberate in contemporary labour mobility. Julian Abraham “Togar” recorded the sounds of sites marked by treaties, documents, and territorial divisions—like Treaty of Giyanti or Treaty of Breda. Through his drums, he makes objects and spaces “have a voice”. He reads archives not through text, but invites them to have rhythmic conversations (p. 47 & 53). Places that were once frozen by bureaucracy and administration—within a file, or even a piece of paper—find their beat again. In the works of Nasikin, Togar, and Sari & Jimged, recording is not only a practice of preserving documents, but also of drumming, copying, layering, and connecting bodies.

There are those boards again. Even in Gallery 1, Singapore Art Museum, one of the venues where Singapore Biennale 2026: *pure intention* is held. This photo here was taken a few steps from the entrance to the exhibition space. Large pillars emphasise the height of this room. On the left, we see vines, twigs, and leaves hanging, made of shiny materials. Facing them, a painting is displayed on a board leaning against the wall. The lower part of that board is wrapped in woven textile. In their vicinity, a round pedestal displays a sculpture made of durian wood on a surface also made of board material.

One of the walls in this exhibition space shows its wood and board panel construction. On this board panel, there is a text written by hand in black marker, an arrangement of woven textiles, a flat screen playing video, and a painting. In front of it, there is a table—also made of board material—displaying hundreds of small figures. Behind the table, there is a room divider made of the same materials as the board panel, but its middle part is see-through. These boards are also plywood, a material often used for temporary purposes—as partition, cement support, etc.—or as base material which is then “hidden” with plaster and paint.

Meanwhile in Jakarta, right in front of the entrance to RUCI Art Space, there is a plywood table supported with wooden trestles. On its surface, there are sculptural figures standing in varying gestures and facing directions. Two woven textiles hang below the table. On the white wall, there are posters showing images of buildings with texts below them, arranged in a horizontal row. A whole plywood board leans against the glass wall, washed in lights from outside. On this board, there is a text, also written



Figures, dedications, and civilisations as part of Singapore Biennale 2026: *pure intention*, at the Singapore Art Museum, Singapore. Courtesy of Singapore Art Museum.

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by hand in black marker, and wrapped in woven textile on its lower part. Departing from their use as transitional material—working surface, temporary partition, cement support—these boards have become a stage.

Still in Jakarta, RUBANAH Underground Hub exhibition space appears to have dim lighting. Light is directed exclusively on the artworks. The grey wall displays two photographs of stones on black backgrounds. On the same wall, further towards the back of the room, we see earth-coloured rectangular panels. Two long objects that resemble wooden logs, gold-coloured, are placed on top of two tables with plywood surfaces. On one of the tables hangs a woven textile. Two dark-coloured bean bags are positioned to face a screen hanging between a pair of speakers. This photo captured the screen showing two people making a sculpture. In front of the screen, a bit to its side, stands a wooden pedestal with an object inside a glass box displayed on top. Here, like in other exhibition spaces, plywood becomes base, plane, as well as ‘stage’ for other materials, be it texts, woven textiles, bronze, or gold. On those long boards sit two pieces of Anusapati’s wood-but-bronze. Plywood is also processed into pedestals for Titarubi’s golden nutmeg. Woven textiles from the collection of Presiden Tidore are wrapped around, draped, or spread out on top of them.

Where the two previous threads touch on the fractures of history, this third one threads through how history is recorded, copied, and experienced—and recurs. Nasikin uses paper—a medium for notation—as the body of the work itself (p. 78). Paper pulp sourced from cement packaging is not filled with text, but becomes form.



Figures, dedications, and civilisations at RUCI Art Space, Jakarta.
Photo by M. Revaldi Nur Putra, courtesy of Hyphen—.



Figures, dedications, and civilisations at RUBANAH Underground Hub, Jakarta.
Photo by M. Revaldi Nur Putra, courtesy of Hyphen—.

Archive and material switch positions: what typically serve as carriers of notation now become a visual event. Togar also works with recordings (p. 47 & 53). The beats and resonance he produces are not mere transient sound; he records space through vibrations. Repeating rhythm becomes a way to get back in touch with locations that were once determined by documents and treaties. In the works of Hahan (p. 103) and Tom (p. 101), archive and image are not shown as final evidence, but as grounds for reinterpretation. By processing iconography and monuments, they reveal that representations of history are always available for reconfiguration. Sari & Jimged gather texts, sounds, and bodies in one space (p. 80). Here, to record is not merely to preserve, but to create opportunities for learning together—to let conversations happen between experiences separated by time. In these approaches, memory is not fixed. It remains present as something continuously re-made and negotiated—through copies, sounds, gestures, and encounters. These readings, works, and practices return to one simple question: how do we handle what is already here—in our hands, before us?

24

The last image is not embedded in this text because we will find it on the page that follows this essay. This photograph shows our copies of figures, together with their moulds, in a storage where they are kept at Griya Seni Hj. Kustiyah Edhi Sunarso alongside archives, miniatures, models, and works of Edhi Sunarso that are not on display. Storage is not an end. It is a pause before the next handling. Here, these figures wait for their turn to replace the contents of Museum Monas. For it is here too that the management team of Museum Monas keeps coming back, seeking advice and assistance for conservation.

In the exhibition space, we see copied figures that have been painted. In storage, they are not painted yet. According to a list of archives and Edhi Sunarso's statements, the small figures are brought to Museum Monas unpainted. Paint is applied once those bodies arrive to prevent injuries on their surface throughout their journey. Fragile surfaces demand caution; every movement leaves the possibility for scars. Conservation is not merely preserving the past as it was. It determines how something is valued and returned to presence. The storage at Griya Seni Hj. Kustiyah Edhi Sunarso is not an end—it is a pause before the next handling.

Griya Seni Hj. Kustiyah Edhi Sunarso

Jl. Cempaka No. 72, Nganti, Sleman,
Yogyakarta, Indonesia, 55285

September 2, 2025–March 29, 2026





When the flood is over begins with a question of conservation: how to care for the vast cycle of dioramas at the National History Museum, located beneath the National Monument? Produced under the supervision of sculptor Edhi Sunarso during the political upheavals of the mid-1960s until 1970s, these dioramas narrate the formation of the Indonesian nation-state. Their making involved large teams of young and established sculptors and painters, working from detailed manuscripts compiled by a group of at least thirty historians.

In 2007, a collective of historians proposed revisiting and revising the dioramas, but nothing came of this proposal. In 2018, the Jakarta City Government selected an architect through an open call to renew the museum as an “immersive experience.” The chosen design had the potential to eliminate the dioramas entirely. This idea was shelved, but this decision could be revoked at any time—a latent threat hanging over the museum. By 2025, the new regime has made clear its intent to rewrite national history. In this climate, *When the flood is over* takes shape as a pre-emptive, citizen-led act of conservation: refusing erasure by remaking—rather than replacing—the figures on our own terms.

Since 2023, *When the flood is over* has been initiated and carried out by a group of civilians working through a principle of conviviality. Conservation here is recognized as a long-term, perhaps endless, process: copying the diorama figures by hand, one at a time, to slowly generate sets to be stored in Edhi Sunarso’s former studio, where they were first made. Open calls bring together young sculptors with veterans who once worked under Edhi Sunarso. While historians, artists, and researchers are invited to speak during the process—offering critical lenses, or disbelief, towards the official narrative.

The first set is painted and circulated in exhibitions as a provocation, a campaign, and a call. The second set—still in their molds, left unpainted—is held in perpetuity at Griya Seni Hj. Kustiyah Edhi Sunarso, awaiting the moment they may need to stand in the place of the originals. This choice is not only symbolic but practical: since the 1970s, Museum Monas has turned to Edhi Sunarso’s studio whenever conservation questions arise. The miniature figures—or “dolls” as they are often called—remain where knowledge of their making has always been held.



Griya Seni Hj. Kustiyah Edhi Sunarso, Hyphen—, Tom Nicholson
with Ary “Jimged” Sendy, Aufa Ariaputra & Nasikin Ahmad

When the flood is over: No. 32
2023

Installation comprising 23 dolls (cast resin figurines) on a table; two HD videos in colour; a second set of dolls for diorama no. 32 along with their moulds, stored at Griya Seni Hj. Kustiyah Edhi Sunarso

Credit:

[Speakers] Anusapati, Ari Sutondo, JJ Rizal, Mon Mudjiman

[Sculptors] Telo Studio dan Ady Try Laksono, Andrea Gani Hidayat,
Ari Sutondo, Baramasta lid Ulfitra, Dirga Yudhistira Indrajaya,
Hudalil Musttaqim, Mon Mudjiman, Qomari Hidayatulloh

[Crew] Bagyo, Liemena Sapriya Putra (Teken), Muhamad Berri Mondigir,
Sarah Aulia Rudiana, Sarino, Supriyanto (Neang), Titis Sekar

[Acknowledgements] Foundation for Arts Initiatives (FfAI),
Creative Australia, and Museum MACAN.

Collection of the artists



The diorama pivots on Sukarno's voice, a speech act where sovereignty is made real through words spoken aloud. *When the flood is over: No. 32* echoes that centrality of voice but unsettles it. In the workshop, speaking and listening fracture authority, opening space for meanings unplanned and unstable. Here, voice shifts from command to rehearsal—collective, tentative, and open-ended.

What begins as a technical process—modelling clay, making moulds, casting resin, painting—becomes a struggle over history itself. The 1964 *draaiboek* (manuscript) for the dioramas in National History Museum (Museum Monas) emphasized the role of the people, yet the diorama stages only political elites, erasing the crowds who witnessed independence. The betrayal is stark: a nation declared in the name of the people, but pictured without them.

Amid resin spills, dust, trial-and-error, and improvised fixes, conservation turns political. The workshop is charged, noisy, and unfinished, closer to rehearsal than monument. Participants duplicate figures not as neutral caretakers but as civilians reclaiming history—re-sounding absent presences, rehearsing new distributions of who belongs on that stage. Conservation here refuses passivity; it becomes negotiation, contestation, and solidarity, enacted at once in matter and in speech, insisting that history is never frozen but always in the making.



What begins as a technical task—modelling clay, remaking moulds, casting resin, painting—becomes a confrontation with how sovereignty is staged. Diorama no. 44 depicts the 1963 handover of West Irian, when the United Nations Temporary Executive Authority (UNTEA) transferred control from the Netherlands to Indonesia. Like diorama no. 32, this scene pivots on a speech act: documents exchanged, words announced, sovereignty made real through performance before an audience.

Yet in miniature, that audience shrinks to a handful of dignitaries. Archival photos show a richer tableau: the Papuans, women in bright kebaya, officials, umbrella-bearers, and onlookers crowding the stage. In the dioramas at the National History Museum (Museum Monas), these figures are missing. The complex realities of the moment—its ceremonies, tensions, contradictions—are condensed into an image of elites. This erasure becomes the site of inquiry. As each figure is remade, conversations turn to absence: where do the women sit? Who holds the umbrella? How are Papuans represented—or not? Speaking and listening accompany the act of making, echoing the diorama's speech act but unsettling its authority.

Discussions stretch further, drawing in painter Emiria Sunassa, the long history of mining in Papua, and the ongoing realities of extraction. Conservation here is less about restoring a diorama than troubling it—insisting history is never fixed in state image but remade through matter, speech, and what it excludes.



Griya Seni Hj. Kustiyah Edhi Sunarso, Hyphen—, Tom Nicholson
with Ary “Jimged” Sendy, Aufa Ariaputra, Nasikin Ahmad & Omar Aryarindra

When the flood is over: No. 44

2025

Installation comprising 157 dolls (cast resin figurines) on a table; two HD videos in colour; a second set of dolls for diorama no. 44 along with their moulds, stored at Griya Seni Hj. Kustiyah Edhi Sunarso

Credit:

[Speakers] Anusapati, JJ Rizal, Ita Fatia Nadia, Grace Samboh,
Riksa Afiaty, Veronika Kusumaryati

[Sculptors] Telo Studio and Andrea Gani Hidayat, Audya Amalia, Dirga Yudhistira
Indrajaya, Faiha Maghrista, Huda Lil Musttaqim, Prisman Nazara, Qomari Hidayatulloh,
Shinta Dwi Amalia, Yuseva Ayu Nourmalinda Deassy Afsari, Yusrani Saskia

[Crew] angun Wahyudianto, Davis Aji Putra K, Fita Retno S., Herry Christanto, Jimmy
Aprilio Pratama, M. Revaldi Nur Putra, Munadi Alianto (Xonad), Raihana Ghaniya,
Salman Hanief, Sarino, Titis Sekar

[Acknowledgements] Henry Moore, Dana Indonesiana, & Singapore Art Museum

Collection of the artists





Singapore Art Museum

39 Keppel Rd, #01-02, Tanjong Pagar Distripark,
Singapore, 089065

October 31, 2025–March 29, 2026

as part of the
Singapore Biennale 2025: pure intention





At once noun and verb, *figure* refers to both a person and a process—an image and an act of thinking. *Figures, dedications, and civilisations* unfold across four interconnected sites—Griya Seni Hj. Kustiyah Edhi Sunarso, RUCI Art Space, RUBANAH Underground Hub, and the Singapore Art Museum—each forming part of a single body of work. Together, these sites trace an ongoing conversation around *When the flood is over*, a citizen-led venture to conserve and contest the cycle of dioramas at the National History Museum beneath the National Monument.

These four presentations are not separate exhibitions but chapters in a shared process. Each takes a different position toward the question of how figures—historical, political, or artistic—are made, remade, or erased. Across them, making becomes a way of thinking; conservation, a way of questioning; and collaboration, a way of remembering. The works, discussions, and gestures circulate among sites, refusing the isolation of objects and authorship, sustaining instead a practice of ongoing relation.

At the Singapore Art Museum, diorama no. 44—which stages the 1963 handover of West Irian from Dutch to Indonesian administration—becomes a site to ask how sovereignty, solidarity, and history itself are figured: through speech, through sculpture, through absence. Within the diorama, the ceremony is led by men who, though not in military uniform, act in uniform—politicians and bureaucrats whose gestures, postures, and presence materialize state power. Missing are the women, workers, Papuans, and witnesses who filled the actual ceremony. In remaking each miniature figure, sculptors, historians, and civilians together question who belongs within the nation's frame. Conservation here is not mere preservation but *re-figuration*: an ongoing process of learning, unlearning, and remaking—of figuring things out, together.

This process resonates across the constellation. From Yogyakarta to Jakarta to Singapore, the project weaves artistic, historical, and civic labour into one field of reflection. Figures here are not monuments to completion but propositions for continuity—each act of making, whether of clay, sound, or cloth, a dedication to life itself. Through repetition, relation, and care, these works propose that civilisation is not a legacy to be preserved but a process to be kept in motion, collectively and without end.





Griya Seni Hj. Kustiyah Edhi Sunarso, Hyphen—, Tom Nicholson with
Ary “Jimged” Sendy, Aufa Ariaputra, Nasikin Ahmad & Omar Aryarindra

When the flood is over: No. 44
2025

Installation comprising 157 dolls (cast resin figurines) [...]

Collection of the artists



Togar have always been fascinated with sound, its environments, and its entanglements. Here, he traverses Yogyakarta with a pair of sticks, drumming not only on instruments but on whatever surfaces the town offers. Tree trunks and rocks on the slopes of Mount Merapi, the gates of the palace fortress, the rolling waves of the southern sea; the wheels of street vendors' carts, bridge railings, coconuts at a beach stall. Drumming becomes a way to inhabit the city, to turn stone, metal, and water into jamming buddies. Such aural regularity binds together objects that otherwise belong to very different worlds—colonial monuments, volcanic landscapes, manmade icons, everyday infrastructures.

What emerges is not spectacle but steadiness. Across these disparate sites once shaped by Dutch rule to “settle” disputes, Togar’s metronome-like beat invokes a sense of persistence—insistent, unchanging. Each surface carries its own associations—ecological, historical, political, social—yet Togar offers no fixed interpretation. Instead, the constant beat with ever-changing sounds and images becomes an open ground, where we can attach our own meanings, memories, and stories. In these gestures, Togar reveals sound as both archive and encounter: rhythm as continuity across difference, a pulse that unsettles inherited frames while grounding us in shared time.

47

Julian Abraham "Togar"

Drummer's gonna drum

2017

Digital video, colour, sound

6'

5 ed. + 1 AP

Collection of the artist

A male figure poised in mid-action. His archer's bow drawn, body leaning back, muscles taut as he prepares to release an arrow. His dark-toned skin is accentuated by ornaments—large earrings, a feathered headdress, and a red sash at his waist. He stands within an environment dominated by enormous vivid pink and red lotus leaves and blossoms that are blooming around him. The contrast between the earthy tones of the archer's body enveloped in a dense vegetal field and the saturated hues of the lotus flowers creates a heightened sense of drama.

Emiria often painted figures from across the archipelago—from Balinese and Tidoreans to Dayaks, Bugis, Papuans, Javanese, and Sundanese—but here the figure's identity is imagined, a creation of the artist's vision. The surreal scale of the lotus plants transforms the scene into a suspended, almost mystical moment.

48

Painted around 1941–1946, during the final years of colonial rule and the dawn of Indonesia's independence, the work conjures questions of identity, perception, and the Other, framing a human presence within a lush, dreamlike world on the threshold of a history in the making.

Emiria Sunassa

**Bahaya belakang kembang teratai
(Danger lurking behind the lotus)**

c. 1941–46

*Oil on board
89.2 x 58.6 cm*

Collection of the National Gallery Singapore



A single nutmeg, encased in 24-karat gold, rests upon a charred fragment of railway sleeper from the Nederlandsch-Indië era. The object is modest in scale, yet luminous, balancing delicacy with weight. The dark grain of burnt wood anchors the eye, while the gleam of gold radiates outward, turning a spice into a relic. Formally, the work is precise. Electroplating the gold requires the surface of the nutmeg—porous, organic, resistant—to be carefully transformed into a conductor before it can accept layers of metal. The process is slow, fragile, exacting. By transforming an ordinary seed into a gleaming relic, Titarubi makes visible how desire for nutmeg fueled violence and exploitation.

In the 16th and 17th centuries, nutmeg from Banda Neira was more precious than gold, its scarcity igniting violent rivalries between European powers. The Dutch conquest of the Banda Islands in 1621, marked by massacre, enslavement, and forced cultivation, secured their monopoly over the “golden” spice. By sheathing the seed in gold, Titarubi makes visible how desire distorted matter into commodity, how a spice became the engine of empire.

What appears as a singular object thus holds the weight of centuries, and hopefully will grow into monuments of memory, desire, and survival.

Titarubi

The golden nutmeg
2018

A 24K gold-plated nutmeg on burnt wood—a part of railway sleeper from the Nederlandsch-Indië era
7 x 7 x 10 cm

Collection of the artist





Togar brings his steady, metronome-like drumming to Roen Island where he begins with a nutmeg tree, tapping its bark with a pair of sticks. The sound is dry, hollow, resonant with age. From there, his hands move to the island's other surfaces: abandoned concrete walls that return a metallic echo, rusted steel beams that ring sharply, the hollow body of a wooden canoe that produces a deep thud, dried nutmegs that scatter brittle percussion, and finally to the sea itself, where corals and seashells yield irregular tones against the tide.

The constancy of the beat holds these disparate timbres together, binding natural, built, and oceanic matter into one rhythmic field. Yet the sameness of rhythm only sharpens difference: each surface speaks in its own register, carrying memories of growth, decay, use, and abandonment. Once the epicenter of the global spice trade, its nutmeg trees tied this remote place to world empires and the Treaty of Breda (1667), which saw Roen Island exchanged by the British for Manhattan. Through drumming, Togar does not narrate this history directly but lets it reverberate through sound. The beat is steady, unchanging; the island answers with echoes shaped by centuries of extraction and entanglement.

53

Julian Abraham "Togar"

Drummer's gonna drum #3

2023

Digital video, BW, sound

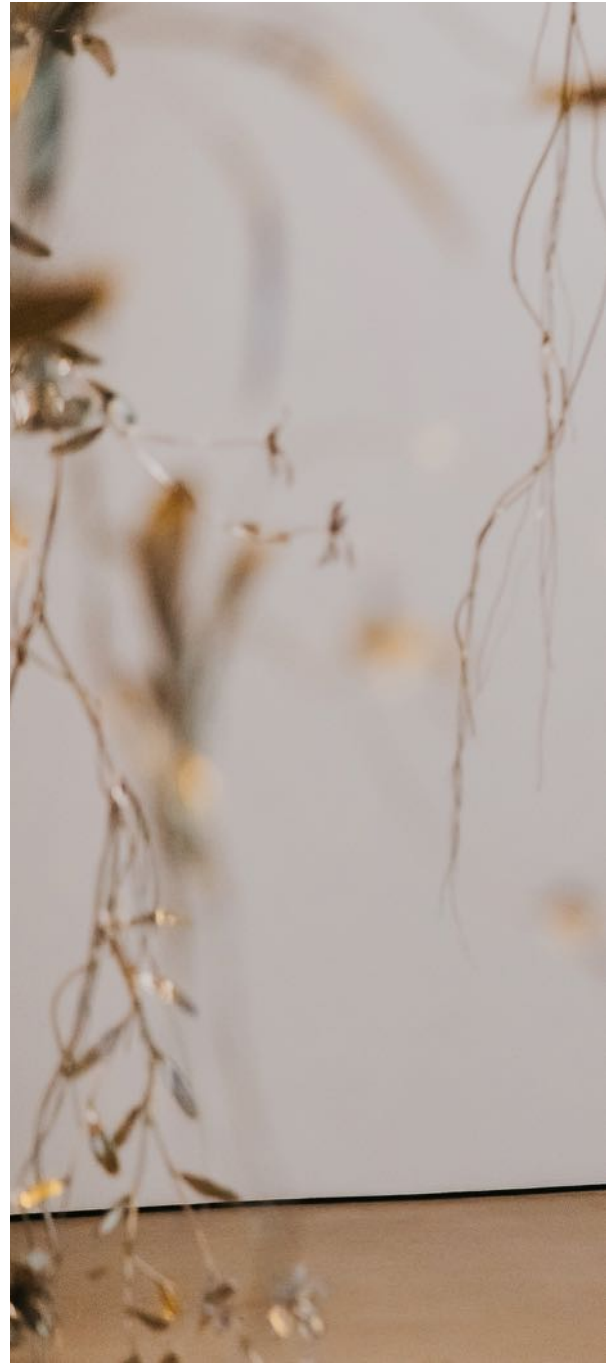
7' 59"

5 ed. + 1 AP

Collection of the artist

At first glance, this painting reads as an ethnographic vignette: people harvesting damar resin, a forest product native to Southeast Asia, within a monumental landscape—slender trunks rise rhythmically toward the sky. A cluster of workers, rendered in dark, almost indistinct tones, move among the trees—marginal, anonymous, small, absorbed into the laboring mass, inseparable from the resource they extract. A thatched-roof hut anchors the scene, while a slash of bright blue sky cuts through the canopy, the only vivid counterpoint to the dense greens and browns of the composition. The scaffolding, hut, and resin harvest index the plantation economy, where damar, like nutmeg or tobacco, was folded into colonial circuits of value.

54 Born in Sulawesi, where damar forests flourish, Emiria herself had worked in Dutch plantation enterprises. Her “love of the jungle,” as contemporaries described it, thus emerges within contradiction. An enormous ambivalence animates the scene. The forest overwhelms the composition, refusing to recede into mere backdrop, resisting domestication. What remains is not a straightforward celebration of labor, nor a simple reverie of nature, but a tension between resource and reverence, between a forest rendered extractable and a forest insisting on its own sovereignty.





Emiria Sunassa

Panen damar (Rosin harvest)

Year not yet known

*Oil on canvas
59.6 x 49.5 cm*

Collection of the National Gallery Singapore



Carved from durian wood, this sculpture takes the rounded form of a *kentongan* (slit drum). Split by a narrow opening that reveals a hollowed core, the *kentongan* was once a vital tool in agrarian villages. Its beats carried codes for fire, theft, gatherings, or festivities—early forms of distant communication, even before morse code. Traditionally made of bamboo or sengon (*Albizia*), which are light and resonant, *kentongan* produces bright or airy tones. Durian wood, by contrast, is dense, coarse-grained, and shorter in sustain. Its sound is warmer, heavier, closer to a pulse than a chime.

Anusapati's choice is deliberate. Working only with fallen or near-dead wood, he offers these remnants a final life through sculpture. Here, durian wood not only produces a different resonance but also insists on presence. For Anusapati, trees and their remnants are living archives. Every grain and scent recalls landscapes now overtaken by highways, malls, and factories. In its density, this durian wood *kentongan* carries mortality and decay, while its form recalls a communal tool that once turned rhythm into language—a steady pulse, an echo of communication that once bound villages together, a reminder that even in fragments, resonance endures.

57

Anusapati

Single object

c. 1994–96

Durian wood

48 x 75 x 47 cm

Collection of the Singapore Art Museum

Each cloth is a portable archive: a record of gendered labor, local knowledge, and island memory. Moving from loom to stage, market to museum, home to biennale, they carry the stubborn persistence of peripheries often written out of history.

These textiles resist being frozen as heritage. They unravel the myth of cultural centrality and re-thread a constellation of edges, where sovereignty lies in the weave itself. Presiden Tidore's practice emerges from this constellation. His weavings and collections enter not simply as aesthetic objects but as acts of diplomacy. He weaves on gedogan and ATBM looms, experimenting with various revived techniques.

He also collects textiles wherever he meets a weaver—behind a mosque in Lombok, from his grandmother's house in Tidore, or while traveling. His holdings, from Alor to Flores, Lombok, Sumatra, and Bali, are not amassed with the eye of an archivist but through encounters. Each acquisition is a gesture of recognition, a refusal to let threads vanish. His weaving embodies this too: not mastery, but insistence that weaving remain a present, possible act.

Placed alongside his music, the textiles extend his disruptions. If sound unsettles through vibration, cloth does so through texture and pattern. Both are his forms of diplomacy—body-to-body, thread-to-thread, note-to-note.

58

Presiden Tidore

Collection of weavings
since 2010

*Self-made, gifts, and loans of textiles
from the Nusantara archipelago*

Collection of the artist



Provenance: Tibetan
Museum of Tibetan Art
Collection of masterpieces
of Tibetan art and culture
The collection is a testament to the rich cultural heritage of Tibet and the skill of its artisans. It includes a wide range of objects, from ancient Buddhist sculptures to contemporary Tibetan art. The collection is housed in a modern building in London, which provides a unique setting for these treasures. The collection is open to the public, and it is a pleasure to share it with you.



RUBANAH Underground Hub

Wisma Geha—basement. Jl. Timor No. 25, Gondangdia,
Menteng, Jakarta Pusat, Indonesia, 10350

October 25–December 12, 2025





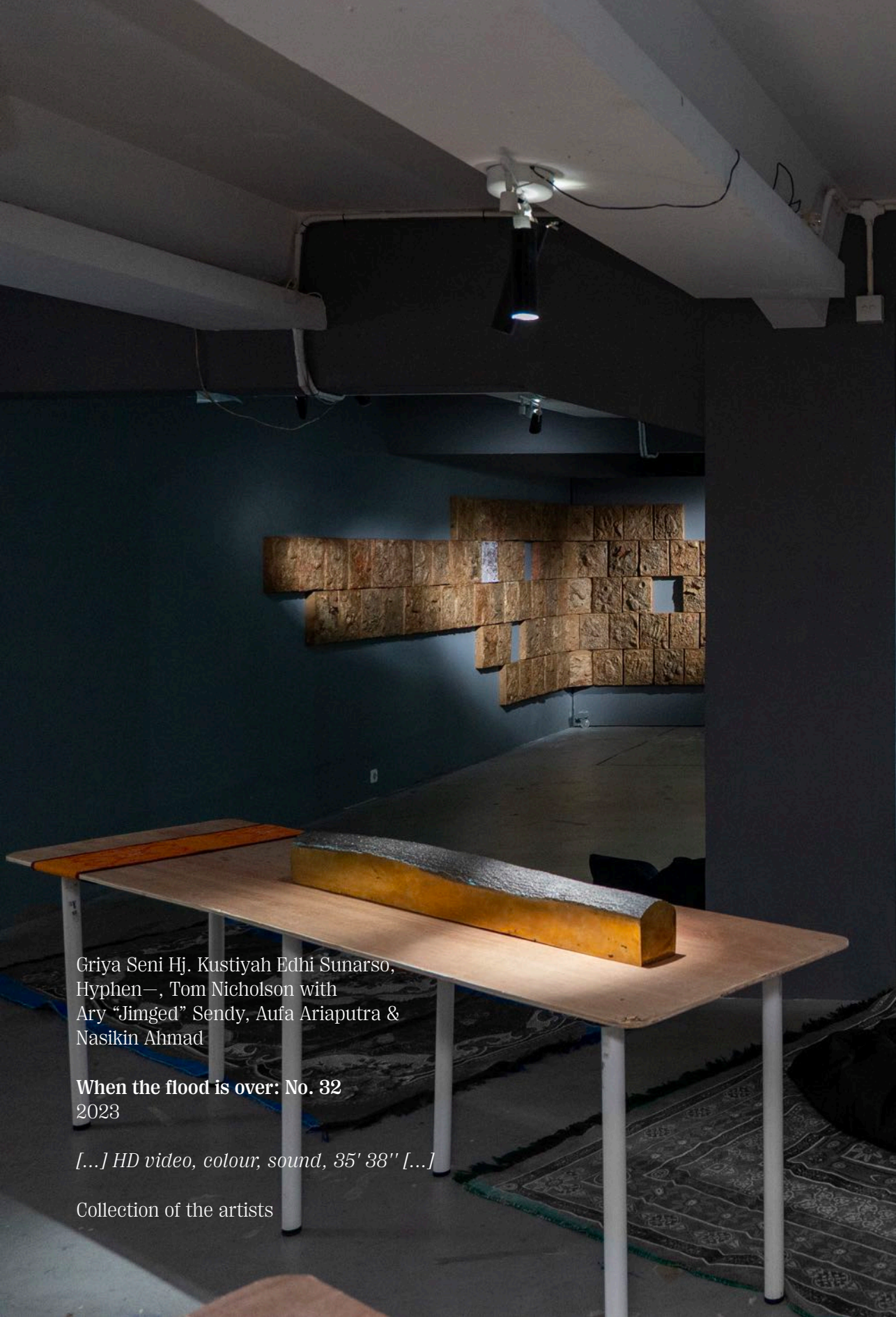
If I commission historians to attempt to create a story for my diorama.

We figure that *dedication* is an intriguing quality. Here, at RUBANAH, we turn to what lies beneath form—the patient attention that allows things to exist. Can we pause to honour the quiet labour behind every act of making? The hands that touch clay, the ears that listen, the eyes that adjust to darkness, the breath that steadies repetition. Here, devotion replaces monumentality. Dedication is not about grand gestures, but about returning—again and again—to the work.

Every material carries its own temperament: the stubbornness of wood, the brittleness of resin, the warmth of bronze, the humidity that never quite leaves the air. Working with them requires patience, curiosity, and negotiation. The people gathered in *When the flood is over*—artists, sculptors, researchers, students—meet these materials not as masters but as companions. To care for matter is to learn from it: to follow its weight, its delay, its resistance. This is how knowledge moves—through time, through fingers, through repetition.

Dedications is therefore about practice as persistence: the eagerness to learn, to unlearn, to begin again. The refusal to stop at mastery. The willingness to stay with what is unfinished. In this devotion to process, making becomes a form of prayer—wordless yet attentive, humble yet enduring. Such an attitude runs through the work of those gathered here, and through the spirit of the conservation project itself. *When the flood is over* is sustained not by urgency, but by care that grows slowly, over years, across hands and generations.

In the underground quiet of RUBANAH, these devotions find resonance. Not as spectacle, but as pulse: small, continuous, alive. To dedicate, here, is to keep working—not toward perfection, but toward connection. Toward an understanding that materials, like people, change us as we work with them. To stay with them—through their cracks, weights, and refusals—is to learn how to live and make, with steadiness, in the aftermath of the flood.



Griya Seni Hj. Kustiyah Edhi Sunarso,
Hyphen—, Tom Nicholson with
Ary “Jimged” Sendy, Aufa Ariaputra &
Nasikin Ahmad

When the flood is over: No. 32
2023

[...] HD video, colour, sound, 35' 38" [...]

Collection of the artists



Sebagai pemilik dari tempat
di mana saya tinggal dan bekerja



/100 "THE GOLDEN NUTMEG"

2012 24k Gold - Plated nutmeg on burnt wood
(of old rail sleeper) in a clear acrylic box.
7x7x10 cm

T i t a n i u m

Titarubi

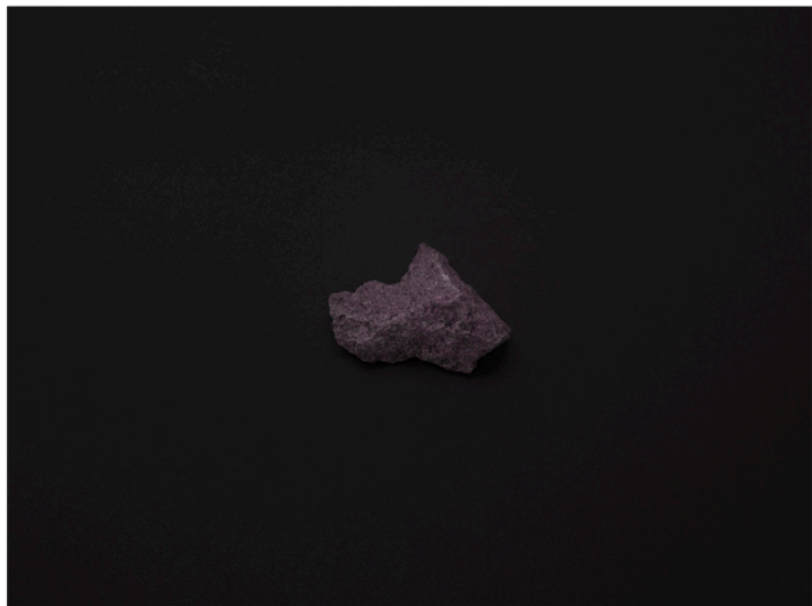
The golden nutmeg

2013

*A 24K gold-plated nutmeg on burnt
wood—a part of railway sleeper from the
Nederlandsch-Indië era
7 x 7 x 10 cm*

Collection of the artist

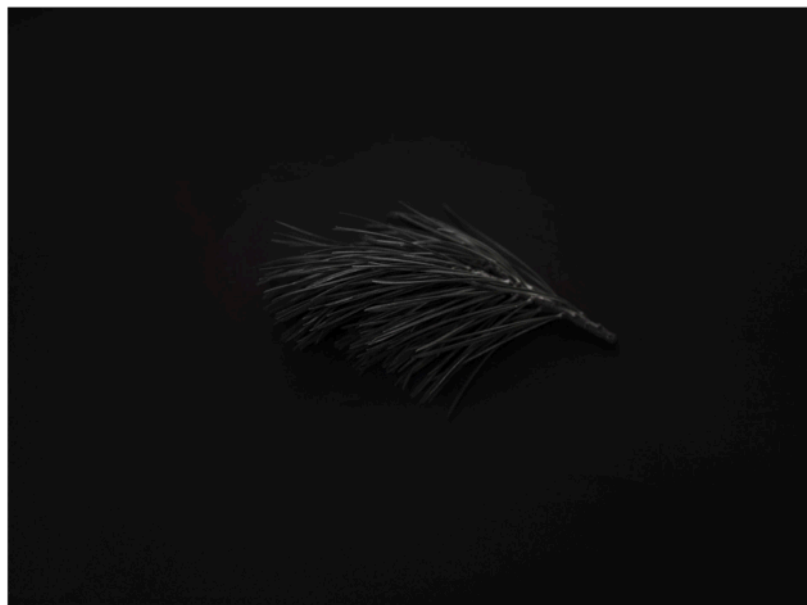
Read more on p. 50.



Dinosaur bone, Japan

147 x 110 cm, 4 ed. + 2 AP

72



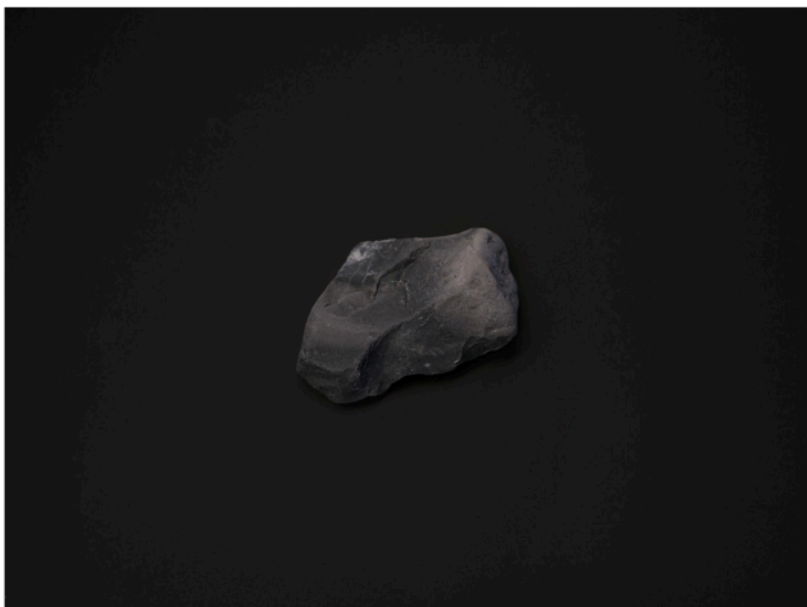
Pine leaf, Arashiyama, Japan

147 x 110 cm, 4 ed. + 2 AP



Marble, Skansbukta, Svalbard

147 x 110 cm, 4 ed. + 2 AP



Stone, Blomstrandhalvoya, Svalbard

147 x 110 cm, 4 ed. + 2 AP



Shrine pebble, Arsahiyama, Japan
60 x 45 cm, 4 ed. + 2 AP



Milky quartz, Namib Desert, Namibia
60 x 45 cm, 4 ed. + 2 AP

74



Speckled marble, Villa San Michele, Italy
60 x 45 cm, 4 ed. + 2 AP



Light blue marble, unknown
60 x 45 cm, 4 ed. + 2 AP

This series presents fragments of geological time—stones, fossils, sediments, vegetal remains—within a carefully constructed studio environment. Each object is photographed with precision. Isolated against neutral backdrops, lit frontally so that textures, edges, and shadows are sharpened. Resulting into both a scientific catalogue and a window display, where light and backdrop make objects appear clear, alluring, almost ready to be possessed. Kinez unsettles this logic by withholding labels, provenance, and explanatory frames. A single stone appears monumental; a fossil resembles a delicate line; a mineral glimmers not with market value but with shadow. For her, one fragment alone is sufficient to embody a world—beauty resides in singularity, not in accumulation.

These objects, Kinez says, seem to “find” her rather than the other way around—a subconscious affinity that ties the body to the matter of the earth. This stands in stark contrast to colonial histories of exploration, where geological surveys paved the way for mining, greed, and violences that still persists. In framing these fragments, Kinez does not own them, nor does she incite the desire to own. Through light, she affirms their existence—not their value, and certainly not their commodity. The series proposes another way of relating: to admire without extracting, to care without exploiting, to encounter the earth’s witnesses whose histories far exceed us, and whose futures we cannot claim.

75

Kinez Riza

**Staring at oneself in a mirror of sort
(a series)**
since 2015

*Archival pigment print
Sizes, editions, and titles below works*

Collection of the artist



76

Anusapati

A piece of memory #1 & #2
2012

Bronze
12 x 9.5 x 120 cm (#1)
13 x 10 x 197cm (#2)

Collection of the artist (#1) & Srisasanti Gallery (#2)



This pair of works presents two pieces of wood “immortalized” in bronze. Anusapati transpose wood into metal with eye-deceiving precision: the dried bark’s texture is captured so meticulously that the boundary between permanence and fragility, material and memory, becomes blurred.

Growing up among rows of rubber trees on the outskirts of Jakarta, Anusapati carries memories of a landscape now gone—replaced by highways, malls, and industrial buildings. These memories of vanished trees shape his practice. By casting fragments of wood into bronze, *A piece of memory #1-2* becomes a small monument to something that once lived, disappeared, yet endures in recollection.

Anusapati’s interest in metal began during his studies at Pratt Institute, New York, where he worked with discarded metal objects he found on the streets. After returning to Indonesia, he continued this approach, though what he encountered along the roadsides was no longer metal debris but piles of wood from fallen, lifeless trees. From there sprang his decision to work exclusively with dead wood. *A piece of memory #1-2* stands as a marker of Anusapati’s material exploration—turning refuse into testimony, the fallen into sculpture, breathing renewed life into what was nearly forgotten.



This installation by Nasikin consists of modular panels resembling rice-field embankments—narrow ridges that have carried feet, tools, and stories for generations, quiet witnesses to survival and dispossession. Made through *papier-mâché*—a process he treats as a medium for noting and recording—this work reflects his farming past: a blunt hoe, he says, wounds the farmer, harms the soil, and unsettles the constellation.

Raised in a *tumpangsari* farming family, he reimagines relations between humans, crops, animals, and the cosmos—relations fractured by industrial agriculture, land grabs, and policies that turned farming into commodities. For Nasikin, soil is not just



medium but archive: a ledger of labor, belief, and violence. Moving from field to gallery, Nasikin insists that the land itself remembers, more persistently than any record. His work treats ancestral methods not as nostalgia but as insurgent conservation, keeping alive practices that resist erasure in the face of extractive economies.

Nasikin Ahmad

**Cangkul terakhir yang lupa diasah
(The last hoe, left unsharpened)**
2025

Cement paper
Installation dimension and arrangement
may vary, each 30 x 24 cm

Collection of the artist



Julia Sarisetiati & Ary "Jimged" Sendy

Possibilities of owning other's text

2021

HD video, colour, sound

59' 09"

Collection of the artists



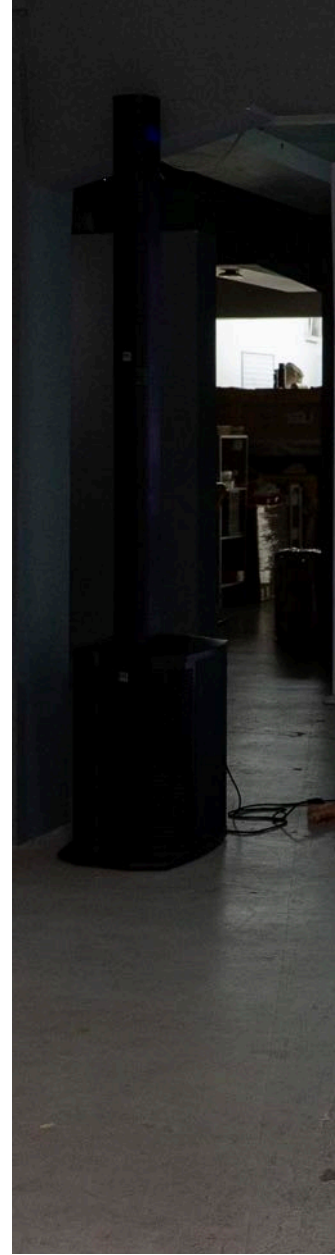
This film was made in Parepare, a port city long shaped by the departures of workers—from precolonial trade routes to today's global circuits of migrant labour. In this place of constant movement and return, a group of seven people gathers: a scholar, fisherman, labourer, mother, youth, businesswoman, and an unemployed man. They sit together, speaking and listening, slowly learning each other's precarious lives.

At the centre of their encounter is the sureq of Colliq Pujié (1812–1876), a Bugis noblewoman and poet whose sung texts voiced resistance against the injustices of her time. Under the guidance of the artists, the group rehearses and reinterprets Pujié's verses—translating them from the 19th century into the urgencies of their own era. Through repetition, reading aloud, and song, her words are inhabited again.

What unfolds is less a performance than a shared process of remembering and unlearning: the participants listen for resonance between their own stories and Pujié's defiance. The act of translation becomes a form of care; the act of care becomes resistance itself. The film observes how language can be returned to the people who live its consequences, and how art can reopen the possibility of owning history together.

The film unfolds as a conversation between artist-cum-drummer Togar and human rights advocate-cum-vocalist Oni, who brings her voice, memory, and experience from Aceh into Togar's *BIOSPOKE*—an attempt at space-making, converting the gallery into a hybrid of studio and cinema, where production, distribution, and conversation converge. Between percussion and voice, hikayat becomes both method and resistance: a way to listen where the state forgets, and to remember where history falters.

The automated percussion system *AADC #16 (Acoustic Analogue Digitally Composed #16)*—visible behind the projection screen—extends this dialogue. It plays back, repeats, and interrupts, its rhythms automated yet responsive, blurring the lines between machine and body, echo and memory. Against the steady pulse of Togar's drums—part heartbeat, part call to witness—Oni weaves stories of courage and recurrence: the widow-warriors of Laksamana Keumalahayati's Inong Balee fleet, the unrevoked 1873 Aceh War declaration, the erased histories of Aceh's sultanahs, and the long silence surrounding sexual violence as a weapon of war. Researcher-cum-producer Grace Samboh situates Oni's words as they reclaim: this is not a story of suffering, but of endurance and courage. Through rhythm, silence, and attention, the film insists: to listen is to act; to remember, a form of justice.





Julian Abraham "Togar" & Oni Imelva

**Sesuatu yang nyata, sesuatu yang diabaikan
(That is real, that is ignored)**

2025

*HD film, BW, sound
55' 12''*

Collection of the artists



Presiden Tidore

Collection of weavings
since 2010

*Self-made, gifts, and loans of textiles
from the Nusantara archipelago*

Collection of the artist

Read more on p. 58-59.





RUCI Art Space

Jl. Senayan No.63-65 (2nd Fl.), Rawa Barat, Kebayoran Baru,
Jakarta Selatan, Indonesia, 12180

October 25–November 23, 2025





A *civilisation* begins not with an empire, but with a figure—then another, and another. A figure is each of us: fragile, finite, yet choosing to stand. To stand is to be aware—of one's own strength, direction, and place within a shared world. Civilisation grows from those who decide to be present, who hold the world together not through command, but through attention.

Here, at RUCI, we look to these figures—singular yet connected—whose gestures, gathered, form a rhythm of coexistence. Civilisation here is not built by rulers or celebrated in monuments. It emerges through the persistence of individuals who keep working, who stay with the task of living together. Artists, workers, weavers, listeners—each one holds a thread in the weave of the common. Distinct, but not apart.

To civilise, in this sense, is not to be perfect, but to keep learning how to move together without erasing differences, how to build without conquest, how to speak without claiming to know. Civilisation is not inherited; it is made and remade—through work, through care, through listening. It is the ongoing decision to remain in relation.

To speak of civilisation, then, is to speak of humility and strength: the courage to begin again, to build slowly, to share time and labour. Every figure matters—not as a symbol, but as a living presence. Civilisation is not the sum of greatness, but the pulse of many acts—steady, ordinary, alive.

Figures, dedications, and civilisations invites us to see history not as inheritance but as rehearsal. Civilisation, in this sense, is not a condition to preserve but a rhythm to keep alive. It is what happens when we stay in the work—together, aware yet uncertain—figuring things out, again and again, in the long afterlife of the flood.



Griya Seni Hj. Kustiyah Edhi Sunarso,
Hyphen—, Tom Nicholson with
Ary “Jimged” Sendy, Aufa Ariaputra &
Nasikin Ahmad

When the flood is over: No. 32
2023

*Installation comprising 23 dolls (cast
resin figurines) [...]*

Collection of the artists



Read more on 81-83.



Griya Seni Hj. Kustiyah Edhi Sunarso,
Hyphen—, Tom Nicholson with
Ary “Jimged” Sendy, Aufa Ariaputra &
Nasikin Ahmad

When the flood is over: No. 32
2023

*Installation comprising 23 dolls (cast
resin figurines) [...]*

Collection of the artists

Read more on p. 31 & 34-35.



1. The monument is located in the center of the city of Jerusalem, in the old city, near the Temple Mount. It is a small, dark, ornate monument with a square base and a small statue of a figure standing on top. The word 'MUSEUM' is visible on the front face of the pedestal.

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The temple is located in the center of the city of Jerusalem, in the old city, near the Temple Mount. It is a small, white, classical-style temple with a hexagonal base, six columns, and a pediment. The word 'PALESTINE' is inscribed on the pediment. Inside the temple, there is a small, dark, ornate monument similar to the one on the left.

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I find nine monuments bearing the name 'Palestine' in and around Melbourne: Avoca, Caulfield, Coburg, Donkirk, Kew, Longwarry, Moorocopa, North Melbourne, and Yering. These monuments commemorate the presence of Australian soldiers in Palestine during WW1 and their role in the 1917 British capture of Bir Saba, or Beersheva (or Be'er Sheva, as it is known when it is captured and cleared by Israeli soldiers in 1948, its Palestinian population killed or gathered together and forcibly transported by truck to Gaza, Bir Saba becoming part of the new state of Israel).

I walk right around the edge of that vast open space, surrounded by a fence without a gate. It is wedged between the historical Ottoman city of Bir Sab'a and the Israeli new city, a glassy office block, a mall, an eight-lane road with traffic whizzing along in both directions. This is where the Israeli soldiers enter Bir Sab'a in 1948. It is the site of the city's Islamic cemetery. The low sun picks out the confusion of rocks and rubble and worn headstones scattered through the expanses of bare earth and long grass.

The sites of the nine monuments bearing the word 'Palestine' are cleared. The nine monuments are gathered together. They are shipped from Melbourne to Tel Aviv, and transported by truck to Sab's. They are installed as a single line, each monument abutting the next, side by side, to create a single metre-long monumental form that diagonally cuts across the busy road alongside the old cemetery, David HaChaim Boulevard. This new monument blocks all eight lanes of traffic. All that stone, the bulk and weight of obelisks and notuda and carved marble, become a kind of arrow, an over-scaled historical marker, pointing to that vast open space surrounded by a wall of concrete. The nine monuments are the same size. The nine inscriptions face the same way: Palestine. Palestine. Palestine. Palestine. Palestine. Palestine. Palestine. Palestine. Palestine. Palestine.

[illegible]

أُعلن على لسانه نعت تذكارية لـ "اسم" فلسطين "في وصول مدينة ملون
الاسرائيلية الشوكا" وكولونيه وكورون وروثيه. التذكاري هو إهداء من يوريسا وشامل
المرور. وأرجع التذكاري هو هذه التذكاري والتذكاري هو أنكر تواجدها
الاسرائيلية في فلسطين حال أقرب العالمة الأولى وروثيه في الاسفلية
المرطانية عام 1917 قبل أن تصبح كما أصبحت تسمى هذه
الاسفلية عليها من قبل عند الاسرائيلية عام 1948 وأ دراسة تفهيم
الفصري على السكان الفلسطينيين الاسرائيلية عندما تم نقلهم إلى قطاع غزة
التي أصبحت لهم التسمية هذه من دولة اسرائيل.

أجول حول طرق السباحة المتفوعة الواسعة المأخوذة بمساح لا يواقة واكنا
نقع من ميمونة نر السمع التاريليل من رمن السارالوقرة العفانمفة والممفة
الجمدة الاءى نفعر بصفوف من الككاب الرامفة ومركز نفعوق
وشار مكمون من نماففة مسارار نسمفر فففة الركامك بكلا الأفافف. ولفه ككاف
الاءى الككاف نفعفوق السارالوقرة الاءى نفعر عام 1948 فاف نفع الأفقرة
الاءاففة مكموفة مومفة الضمفر الضمفر المضمففة من الرار والعمفا من
الأجار والأفافف والأفافف الضمفر الأفاففة البافاففة المضمففة الأرض العاففة
نفعر الأفاففة المضمففة

Comparative monument (Palestine) begins from a curious detail of Australian commemorative culture: the presence of war memorials across Victoria and beyond that bear the name Palestine. Erected in the 1920s, these monuments recall the role of Australian troops in the British capture of Bir Sab'a (Beersheba) in 1917. At the time, Palestine resonated not only as a battlefield but also as a shared position within the British Empire—Australia as dominion, Palestine as mandate.

The work traces the dissonance of that word across geographies and times. To read “Palestine” on Australian stone obelisks is to glimpse a colonial echo, linking military conquest abroad with the disposessions endured by Aboriginal people at home. Tom approaches these histories through the material and language of the monument itself. He begins with a photographic survey of nine Melbourne. From these, he proposes a speculative reassembly: the nine monuments uprooted from their towns, shipped across seas, and lined together as a sixty-metre wall cutting through a busy road in Bir Sab'a.

The work takes form not in stone but in paper: stacks of printed posters, freely taken by viewers to be pasted in public space. This choice renders the monument provisional, distributable, and endlessly reproducible. Instead of permanence, it foregrounds circulation; instead of singular authority, it insists on multiplication. By transplanting monumental form into fragile, portable sheets, *Comparative monument (Palestine)* asks how memory might move differently: less as state triumph, more as shared responsibility to histories of loss and solidarity.

101

Tom Nicholson

Comparative monument (Palestine)

2012

*Stacks of two-sided printed posters, for
visitors to take away to paste up around
Jakarta
50 × 50 cm (each)*

Collection of the artist





At first glance, this work resembles a mirrored blue room divider—its trapezoid shape blocking what lies behind, recalling the secrecy of a confessional. In front of it hangs a painting of a green landscape, its reflection appearing on the mirror just behind the viewer's head when kneeling at the stand. On this stand rests a missalette (a small booklet that serves as a guide during a Catholic Mass). Its contents recount the contested history of The Order of Eleventh March (Surat Perintah 11 Maret, colloquially: Supersemar). This 1966 document marked the transfer of power from Sukarno to Soeharto. Yet the original remains missing, and its meaning continues to be contested.

Should one read and follow the missalette, they will eventually be prompted to utter “Supersemar” into a small microphone. Moments later, a carbonless paper—layered in white, pink, yellow, and green—emerges, revealing images of the planned revisions to the Supersemar diorama at National History Museum (Museum Monas). Through this ritual-like gesture, Hahan turns state history into a site of reflection, where repetition, belief, and authority intertwine.

By re-staging this act of faith and reproduction, the work underscores the fragility of official memory and the perpetual rewriting of national narratives. It asks what happens when history becomes ritual—recited rather than questioned—and how remembrance might instead be reclaimed as a shared, uncertain, and living practice of care.

103

Uji Handoko Eko Saputro

1966

2019

*Galvanize, synthetic suede leather seat,
auto paint, mirror, plywood, digital print
on paper, dot metrix printer, a4 four ply
ner continuous form, voice recognition
electronic module, microphone, mixer,
amplifier & an acrylic on canvas painting
Variable dimension*

Collection of the artist



①



②

This work depicts a long-haired woman wearing a kemben, drawn with pen on paper. The image has been cut along the figure's silhouette and mounted on a black background before being framed. This method recalls scrapbook techniques—adhering cut-out images or photographs onto album pages associated with intimacy and personal or familial memory—though it is unknown whether Sriyani herself arranged and framed the work.

In the lower right corner appear Sriyani's signature, the year 1954, and the word "Nur," which likely refers to the woman portrayed. In Arabic, "Nur" means light—an ironic contrast to her somber expression; her large eyes are half-closed, and her left eyebrow is slightly raised, suggesting doubt or even irritation. Only part of her hair is shaded with black ink, while the rest is left unfilled. In addition to self-portraits and portraits of national figures such as Dewi Sartika, Kartini and Fatmawati, Nur is one of the few portraits by Sriyani where the subject's identity can be identified from the title of the work.

①

Sriyani

Nur

1954

Pen and Chinese ink on paper
50 x 100 cm

Collection of Studio Nasirun

The painting depicts a woman with her hair neatly swept back into a side bun adorned with a flower. A pair of earrings accentuates her composed presence, while arched eyebrows and a subtle touch of lipstick convey deliberate attention to detail. She wears a soft peach garment and holds a piece of cloth—likely a sarong—featuring bright striped and checkered patterns that echo her earrings and extend into the background, visually binding her figure to the surrounding space. The palette embraces bright and warm tones—pink, peach, light green, and light blue. This is one of only two known paintings in which Emiria explicitly references Sulawesi in the title, the island where she was also born.

More than a portrait, the painting seems to stage an encounter between the artist and her subject. The artist's gaze seems neither purely documentary nor idealized—it hovers between empathy and assertion, between observation and imagination. In that tension, Emiria gestures toward the shifting ways women could be seen, understood, or even imagined in her time. Her brushwork becomes a form of inquiry, asking what it means for a woman to look, and to be looked at, within her own world.

107

②

Emiria Sunassa

Wanita Sulawesi
(Woman from Sulawesi)
1958

Oil on canvas
50 x 100 cm

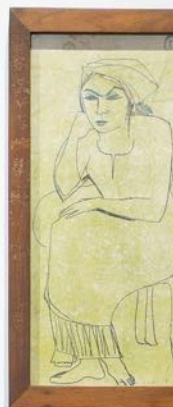
Collection of OHD Museum



①



②



③



④



⑤

This work presents a close-up portrait of a woman, rendered in a dark, muted palette. Her heart-shaped face is framed by sharply arched black eyebrows and almond-shaped eyes without visible whites—a recurring feature in many of Sriyani's portraits. Her lips are faintly defined, almost blending into her pale, grey-tinged skin. Dark round earrings frame her face, while a bright green headscarf covers her black hair, creating a vivid contrast against the subdued tones around her.

Hints of blue in the background are overlaid with brownish hues that gather around the figure. These layers suggest overprinting or the blending of mediums—possibly a monotype reinforced with pastel or crayon, whose grainy texture leaves no brush marks. The softly merging tones lend the portrait a dreamlike quality, as if the figure is emerging gradually from shadow or recollection. Even so, her presence feels steady and quietly assertive—a familiar resonance in Sriyani's portrayals of women.

①

Sriyani

Title not yet known

Year not yet known

Monotype on rice paper

44 x 40 cm

Collection of Annie Hendrotomo

This work depicts two women positioned closely together; their shoulders appear to touch, with no clothing shown. Both wear round earrings, and small flower buds adorn their hair—elements that recall the image of Balinese women.

The woman on the left gazes directly at the viewer with a faint smile. Her hair, drawn in fine unshaded lines, is partly coiled and partly left loose. The woman on the right tilts her head slightly downward. Her hair, unlike the other's, is rendered through dense hatching over an area slightly lighter than the background, and decorated with more flowers—producing a contrast of tone and character between the two.

This monochrome monotype likely combines subtractive and additive techniques: Sriyani may have first covered the surface with ink, then lifted parts of it to create lighter fields, where she drew the delicate lines that form the figures. Through this seemingly simple image, Sriyani reveals her sensitivity to the presence of women—figures marked by gentleness, yet carrying quiet depth.

②

Sriyani

Title not yet known

Year not yet known

Monotype on rice paper
44 x 34 cm

Collection of Annie Hendrotomo

This vertically oriented print depicts a seated woman resting her chin on her hand, rendered through minimal black lines. At first glance, it resembles a charcoal or conte sketch, yet it is, in fact, a monotype—a single-print technique that Sriyani practiced throughout her career. Here, she uses an additive drawing method, applying black ink onto a plate—likely glass or metal—before transferring it onto green rice paper.

Though composed in just one tone, the figure is immediately recognizable as a woman rooted in local culture, suggested by her head covering, *baju kurung* (a traditional Malay blouse), and vertically patterned sarong. Her eyebrows are drawn in a bold, continuous line, while her eyes—formed by dense patches of shading—convey a distant, unfocused gaze.

Across her work, Sriyani often portrayed women from diverse ethnic backgrounds in the archipelago—perhaps figures she encountered during her travels, or shaped by her own idealized vision of the “Indonesian woman.” These figures reveal her fascination with cultural diversity, along with her attentiveness to women’s roles and presence within Indonesia’s social fabric.

③

Sriyani

Title not yet known

Year not yet known

Monotype on rice paper
51 x 30 cm

Collection of Annie Hendrotomo

This painting portrays a middle-aged woman set against a red background, adorned with two blue-feathered birds amid floral and foliage patterns resembling batik motifs. The woman turns slightly to the side, revealing neatly coiled white hair and a jeweled earring on her left ear. Draped only in a shawl over her shoulders, she displays her slender neck and upper chest with quiet elegance.

Instead of the tan complexion typical of women from Indonesia, the figure's skin is rendered in a greenish hue—a tone also found in another of Sriyani's works from the same period, *Nona Jakarta* (1976), held in the collection of the Jakarta Arts Council. Such colour choices were not uncommon among painters in Indonesia of the time, who often used a variety of tones—green, blue, yellow, or pink—to depict human skin, evoking an expressive as well as spiritual sensibility.

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The painting reveals a balance between realism and decorative elements, offering a glimpse into another side of Sriyani's artistry. Beyond her painting practice, Sriyani was known for creating various crafts—terracotta vessels, batik, as well as carved and painted household furnishings such as chairs, cabinets, and *gebyok* (traditional Javanese room dividers).

④

Sriyani

Title not yet known

1973

Oil on canvas

50 x 60 cm

Collection of Annie Hendrotomo

This work depicts two brown-skinned women wearing green headpieces against a blue ground—perhaps a room, perhaps an open sky. Their dark brown hair is only a few shades deeper than their skin.

The woman on the left appears slightly farther from the viewer. Her shoulder is visible, though her clothing remains indeterminate. She tilts her head downward, her pupils indicating the direction of her gaze—toward the woman beside her. The figure on the right, by contrast, faces forward. Her black eyes, rendered without whites, give a vacant impression, as if she is looking back at the viewer without truly seeing. Because she is positioned closer, her shoulders fall outside the frame.

From their facial features, head ornaments, and shoulder-baring garments, one might be reminded of images of Balinese women—figures that frequently appeared on the canvases of painters working in Sriyani's time.

The exact technique remains uncertain: whether a pure monotype printed in several colours, or one later layered with another medium, such as pastel, to extend its tonal range.

⑤

Sriyani

Title not yet known

1969

Monotype on rice paper

48 x 39 cm

Collection of Annie Hendrotomo





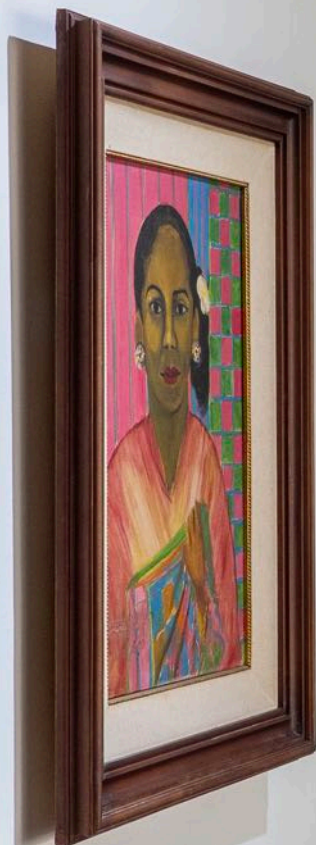
Presiden Tidore

Collection of weavings
since 2010

*Self-made, gifts, and loans of textiles
from the Nusantara archipelago*

Collection of the artist

Read more on p. 58-59.

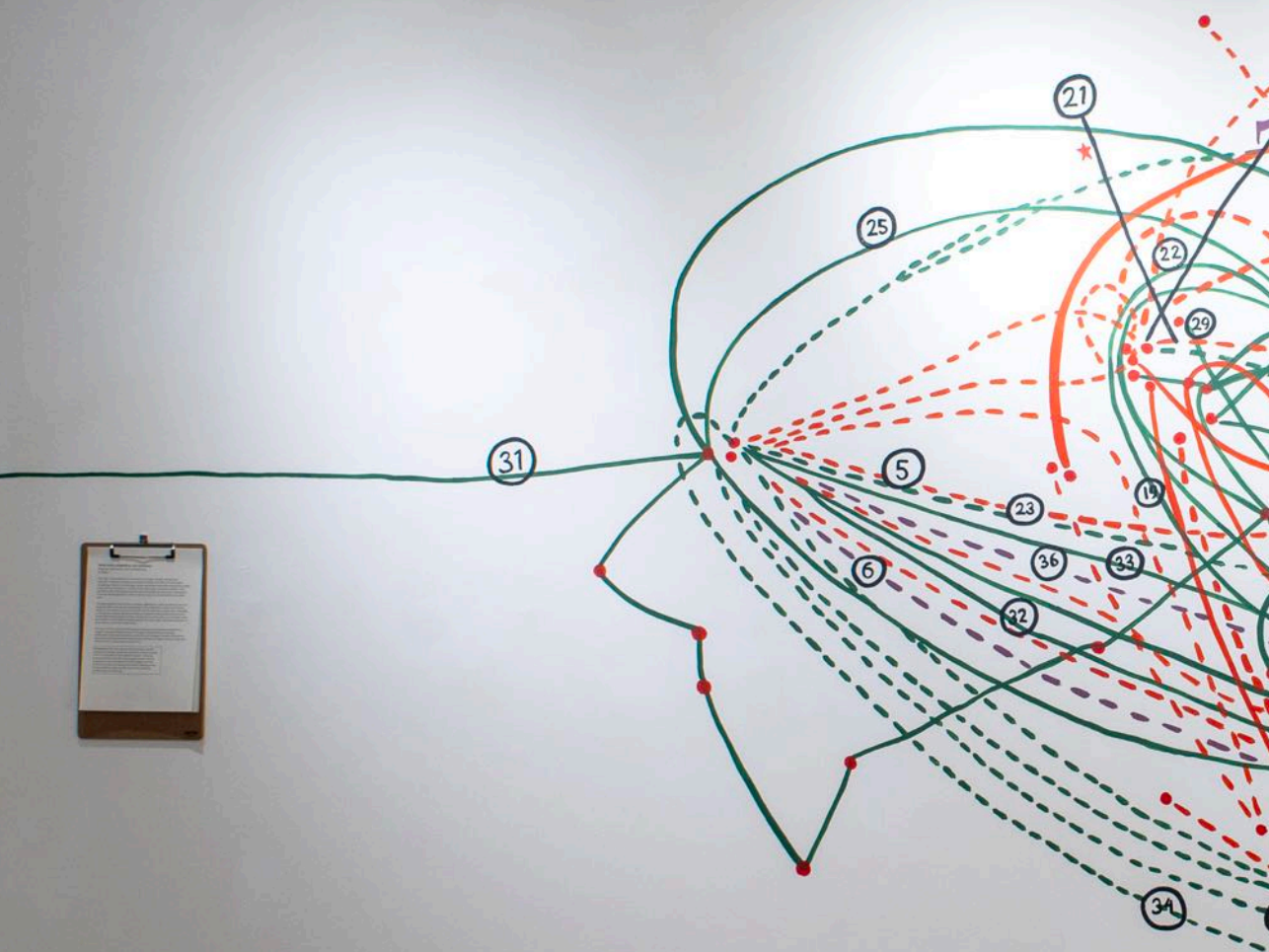




MAP & LEGEND

Figures, dedications, and civilisations

MAP





LEGEND

This map is a constellation of movements—of people, treaties, artworks and materials—traced across oceans and borders between the 1930s and the present. Navigating a refusal of chronologies, some lines follow statecraft and diplomacy; others mark circuits of extraction or routes of exile. Many link to artworks included in this exhibition, which themselves become acts of remembering, resisting, or refusing the histories that shaped them—since no history is neutral nor ever contains the whole truth.

The legend gathers short entries on treaties, agreements, travels, as well as on artistic and diplomatic work around *When the flood is over: No. 44* (2025)—a conservation work on diorama no. 44 "The Liberation of Irian Jaya, 1 May 1963", in the National History Museum (Museum Monas, see p. 31 & 34-35). Each entry insists that history is lived not only in documents or monuments, but in bodies, voices and matter: in resin blocks, tailings dumped into rivers, letters that never surfaced, or a drum struck on an island traded away.

This map is not a neutral record. National histories are themselves curated to fix a singular, state-sanctioned narrative. The figures conserved here are equally problematic. They carry distortions, omissions and ideological violence. Yet they also reveal how official histories are constructed—and how we might confront, remake and resound them in the present, for the future.

DISCLAIMER: This map weaves oral testimonies, archival sources and artistic practices; factual accuracy is pursued but it is inevitably partial. Sensitive issues— including colonial violence, sexual violence, genocide and military repression—are mentioned. We acknowledge that these histories remain contested and that their retelling carries responsibilities. What we offer here is not closure but coordinates for reckoning.

1. ★ ***Possibilities of owning other's text (2021)***, see also p. 80.

This is a film by **Julia Sarisetiati** (b. 1981) and **Ary “Jimged” Sendy** (b. 1978). Shot in Parepare, a port long shaped by the departures of workers—from precolonial trade routes to today’s migrant labour flows—that becomes the site of a gathering: a scholar, fisherman, labourer, mother, youth, businesswoman and an unemployed man. They begin by introducing themselves, slowly learning each other’s precarious realities. Into this circle enters the 19th-century sureq of Bugis noblewoman and poet Colliq Pujié (1812–1876), whose sung texts called for resistance against her family’s feudalism and colonial rule. Rehearsing and performing her words together, the group turns Colliq Pujié’s poetics into a collective act of remembering and resisting within the urgencies of our time.

2. 🏰 **Treaty of Breda, 1667**

An equal-swap trade between imperial rivals: The Dutch Republic ceded control of Manhattan—then New Amsterdam—to the British Empire in exchange for Roen, a tiny nutmeg-rich island in the Moluccas.

3. ----- ***Golden nutmeg (2013)***, see also p. 50.

This single nutmeg is a work by **Titarubi** (b. 1968). Gold-plated by the artist’s own hand, a singular nutmeg stands on a pedestal: the starting point of Titarubi’s long engagement with spice, value and colonial history. In the 17th century, nutmeg from the Maluku Islands was prized like gold, fought over by empires, and even traded for New Amsterdam. Today, Papua’s mountains of gold continue this cycle of extraction. By devising her own gold-plating system and labouring over each seed, Titarubi does more than represent history—she transforms it. This small, gleaming nutmeg would become the kernel of a larger body of work, where hundreds of gilded seeds accumulate into monuments of desire, violence and survival.

4. 🏰 **Treaty of Giyanti, 1755**

A line drawn by Dutch hands split the Mataram Sultanate into Surakarta and Yogyakarta. One agreement fixed rival courts, cities and palaces, laying the architecture of colonial rule in Mataram (now Surakarta & Yogyakarta).

5. ----- ***Drummer’s gonna’ drum (2017) & Drummer’s gonna drum #3 (2023)***, see also p. 47 & 53.

Julian Abraham “Togar” (b. 1987) drums on the surfaces of cities built by the empire. In Yogyakarta (2017), he strikes stone, soil and walls shaped by the Treaty of Giyanti—a Dutch-imposed partition that carved royal territory into architecture. In Pulau Roen (2023), where nutmeg was once worth a continent, he drums along coastlines and colonial remnants—the island was traded for Manhattan—a blunt transaction between spice and land. Togar continues his series of sonic inquiries: rhythm as reading, percussion as audit. These gestures are not music, but labour. Patterned, persistent, unresolved. A body striking the world to hear what history echoes back.

6. — — — — **Kontrak Karya (Contract of Work/CoW), 1967**

In April 1967—just a month after Soeharto seized power—the Indonesian government signed its first CoW with Freeport Indonesia, a subsidiary of the **US company Freeport-McMoRan**, granting them the rights to exploit Ertsberg mountain in West Irian. This very first foreign investment deal of the New Order became a main pillar of the economy even if the profit-sharing was set at 10 per cent for Indonesia and 90 per cent for Freeport. No Papuans were involved in this CoW, which was signed two years prior to *Penentuan Pendapat Rakyat* (Act of Free Choice), the referendum that legalised Indonesia's rule over Papua in 1969.

7. ————— **Gold & copper extraction, since 1936**

In 1936, Dutch geologist Jean Jacques Dozy reported vast copper reserves in Papua's Carstensz Mountains. Rediscovered by Freeport executives in 1960, Ertsberg became the basis for IndonesiaFreeport CoW (first signed in 1967, second in 1991 and third in 2018, lasting until 2041). Mining began in 1972; Grasberg, discovered in 1988, soon eclipsed Ertsberg. By 2019, Freeport had extracted 12.245 million tons of copper and 1,430 tons of gold. In 2023 alone, 825,000 tonnes of copper, 1.97 million ounces of gold, USD 3.16 billion net income. Most of this ore leaves Papua. Concentrates are shipped to Freeport's smelter in Spain, to Japan, China and South Korea. From 2025, the Gresik smelter in East Java—majority-owned by Mitsubishi—will process the bulk, yet still for export. Papua's mountains are folded into global circuits of capital, enriching elsewhere.

The costs remain local. Grasberg's open-pit mine discharges 167 million metric tonnes of waste daily into the Ajkwa River; by 2041, three billion tonnes of tailings will poison the ecosystem sustaining the Kamoro and Amungme. A heavy military presence "securing" the mine has brought violence and human rights abuses. From Dozy's report in Leiden to Freeport's furnaces in Spain, from Mitsubishi's smelters to China's cables, Papua's gold and copper continue to leave. Wealth flows outward. What remains is dispossession.

8. — — — — **Staring at oneself in a mirror of sort (since 2015)**, see also p. 75.

Across the globe, **Kinez Riza** (b. 1989) seeks out fragments of deep time—fossils, stones, sediments—that have long drawn the fascination of archaeologists, collectors and empires. Colonial expeditions once turned such fragments into frontiers of extraction: Dutch records of the Ertsberg outcrop in 1936, for instance, paved the way for Grasberg, now one of the world's largest gold and copper mines. Kinez's practice articulates a refusal of such logic. She photographs rare materials with restraint—set against stark grounds, lit to reveal form and shadow—treating them as presences rather than possessions. She elevates their value without taking them, suggesting another relation: to admire without extracting, to attend without exploiting. In her images, nature itself is an archive—where human and non-human histories persist in fragile entanglement.

9. ————— **The painter Emiria Sunassa, 1894–1964**. See also p. 48, 55, & 107.

She was born in Tanawangko (now North Sulawesi) of Tidorean lineage. The island Sultanate of Tidore once held tributary lands stretching west to North Sulawesi

and east to Papua (including Fakfak, Kaimana, Raja Ampat and Sorong). **Emiria** spent her life travelling across the archipelago and abroad, before her final years in Lampung.

10. — Rehearsed improvisation, colonial mobility, shifting identities: Emmy, Sunny, Emiria, c. 1910–1920

Before **Emiria** entered Jakarta's artistic and political circles in the 1940s and 1950s, she was remembered otherwise. Oral accounts suggest she was identified not as a princess of Tidore but as Emmy Pareira (a Minahasan woman from the Manoppo-Pareira clan), raised in Manado and educated in Christian missionary schools. In the mid 1910s, she and one of her sisters were known as musicians— pianist and singer—performing in Dutch société circles in Ternate and, briefly, in Europe (1914–1915). There she went by the name “Sunny.” Later, in the 1920s, she described herself as a “girl from the East” studying eurhythmics (music through movement) with the Dalcroze method in Brussels and Vienna.

11. ★ Two jobs at once, why not?! 1925–1928

In Halmahera, **Emiria** worked for agricultural companies; *administrar* for the Akelamo and director of Oba Cultuur Mij.

12. — — — — Collection of weavings (since 2010), see p. 58.

Musician and researcher **Presiden Tidore** (b. 1991) works through sound and thread, tracing the legacies of Emiria Sunassa and the sovereignties she embodied. Alongside his music, he has built a collection of tenun—woven textiles from Sumba, Tidore, Ternate, Flores, Aceh, and Papua—deliberately outside the Javanese canon of “national culture.”

Each cloth is a portable archive. A record of gendered labour, local knowledge and island memory. Moving from loom to stage, market to museum, home to biennale, they carry the stubborn persistence of peripheries that are often written out of history. These textiles resist being frozen as heritage for him and his peers. They unravel the myth of cultural centrality and rethread a constellation of edges, where sovereignty lies in the weave itself.

13. ★ Nederlandsche Koloniale Petroleum Maatschappij, 1929

Whilst working for the US-proxy Dutch colonial oil company, **Emiria** lived near the Gerong River, where she sailed a lot and went hunting for elephant tracks.

14. ★ Undermining Artama, 1933–1937

Emiria worked as *administrar* in another Dutch colonial venture in Pengalengan.

15. ——— & ——— A proposed home, transcolonial communication and bureaucratic magnet, 1954

Excerpt from Emiria's letter to GF Pijper¹: *They have also requested me for Makassar, for the Kebudajaan [culture department], which is the reason for my plans. It was a request I received a long time ago, and they keep coming back to it. When I start talking about Tanahwangko, I'll mean that I'll be getting a house in Tondano, where I'll join the Pinaesaan Faculty to do something related to the Kebudajaan, but by then you will know where I'll be. If it weren't quite so ridiculous, I would suggest that you come to Tondano. There your life would be different. Apart from lecturing, you would have a life approximating life somewhere in Holland, because it has stayed that way until today. You'd see old mangles there, which I believe farmers still use in your country.*

16. ——— & ——— Visa rejected, 1961

Papua and the surrounding islands were still considered Netherlands New Guinea when Emiria wanted to return to her hometown. When the Dutch rejected her visa, Emiria announced her plans to appeal to the UN headquarters in New York. She transited in Singapore, where she was hosted for at least ten months by A. H. Edrus of Qalam Publishing. She never went to the UN.

126 17. ——— Cangkul terakhir yang lupa diasah (The last hoe, left unsharpened, 2025), see p. 79.

This is an installation by Nasikin Ahmad (b. 1991). Consisting of panels resembling rice-field embankments arranged in a circle, it forms a cylindrical monument evoking a memory of the fields. The piece was created using papier-mâché, treating it as a medium for making notes and recording. Attempting to reflect on his farming past, Nasikin said that a blunt hoe wounds the farmer, harms the soil and unsettles the constellation. Raised in a tumpangsari farming family, he reimagines relations between humans, crops, animals and the cosmos—relations fractured by industrial agriculture and land dispossession. For him, soil is not only a medium but an archive, a ledger of labour, belief and violence, insisting that the land itself remembers more persistently than any record.

18. ——— & ——— The Asian-African Conference, 1955

In Bandung, as part of the Biro Irian committee, Supeni was remembered for moving through halls and foyers, approaching delegates one by one to secure support for Indonesia's claim over West Irian's liberation. This kind of improvisational, face-to-face diplomacy earned her the nickname "Irian Lady." As part of Sukarno's newly formed bureau, she embodied how the claim to West Irian was carried not only in speeches but in persistent personal encounters.

¹ Letter dated 15 October 1954 from Emiria Sunassa to Willem Pijper, from the Guillaume Frédéric Pijper archive and collection, Leiden University Libraries. Translation by Zena Vollenberg-Jenkins. From a forthcoming volume, edited by Anissa Rahadiningtyas, Marije Plomp and Roger Nelson, under advance contract with Leiden University Press.

19. ——— & ——— The 46th Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) Conference, 1957

Leading the Indonesian delegation to London, **Supeni** raised Indonesia's claim over the liberation of West Irian. The intervention sparked a public reaction from the floor—a controversy that spilled into the press. In this moment, Supeni's role was not only representative but disruptive—a reminder that the question of West Irian was not confined to Jakarta but pressed into the heart of Europe.

20. ——— & ——— A knock on each door, 1962

Supeni confirmed Philippine support for Indonesia's claim to West Irian in a meeting with Vice President **Emmanuel Pelaez**. She sought—and won—assurances that no air strikes would be launched from Clark Field, a nearby US airbase. The meeting, held in a private residence, exemplifies her mode of diplomacy: informal, improvised, yet decisive in securing a fragile promise.

21. ——— & ★ *Din din* (2026), see p. 139.

This is a book that collects thoughts and excerpted conversations with people from diverse, multidisciplinary backgrounds whose works explore various practices to discuss and develop strategies, scenarios, models, critical visualisations and commentaries addressing the discourse of decolonisation. One starting point for this compilation was a series of talks 'Padat Merayap' ('Congestion'), initiated in 2019 by **Riksa Afiaty** (b. 1986) and **Karoline Swiezynski**, from Jan van Eyck.

Contributors: Akmalia Rizqita "Chita", Catarina Simão, Claudia Martinez Garay, Ferdiansyah Thajib, Gökean Demirkazik, Grace Samboh, Harm Stevens, Ilya Fedorov, Köken Ergün, Maria Inarita Uthe, Marjolein van Pagee, Michelle Wun Ting Wong, Oesman Effendi, Pablo José Ramírez, Patrick D. Flores, Post Museum, Ratna Mufida, Riksa Afiaty, Roy Villevoeye, They Are Here, Timoteus Anggawan Kusno.

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22. ——— A preamble to cultural diplomacy, 1947–1956

In 1947, **Dr Hurustiati**—who had earned her medical degree from the Geneeskundige Hooie School (GHS) in Jakarta—moved to London with her husband and pursued anthropology at the London School of Economics and Political Science. There she also lectured and organised cultural programmes, including the Exhibition of Indonesia, in 1952, one of the earliest documented international group exhibitions of artists from Indonesia. In 1954, she relocated to Moscow before returning to Jakarta between 1955 and 1956. In 1955, the Cultural Department of the Indonesian Embassy published *Collected Lectures and Speeches of Dr Hurustiati Subandrio*.

23. ——— BIOSPOKE (since 2024), with *Sesuatu yang nyata, sesuatu yang diabaikan* (That is real, that is ignored, 2025), see p. 82 & 142–147.

This is an installation by **Togar**. **BIOSPOKE** is a sonic space for rehearsal and dialogue, where percussion meets testimony. **Oni Imelva** (b. 1981)—singer, narrator and human rights advocate from Aceh—brought her voice into the space. She recalled the widow-warriors of Keumalahayati's Inong Balee, exposed how violence is normalised from Dutch colonial board games to posttsunami films and named sexual violence as a weapon of war, still reckoned with through the



Going through the map's legend at RUBANAH Underground Hub.
Photo by M. Revaldi, courtesy of Hyphen—.

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Aceh Truth and Reconciliation Commission. She also invoked Syiah Kuala's 17th-century fatwas affirming women's right to lead, learn and speak. Against Togar's drums, her words became rhythm: not music, but a living archive, a strike against forgetting.

24. ★ The legacy of Hurustiati in women's reproductive rights, 1956–1957

While heading the Public Health section of the Ministry of Health, **Dr Hurustiati** established the *Perkumpulan Keluarga Berencana Indonesia* (PKBI, Indonesia's Planned Parenthood Association). Her leadership helped shift family planning from private initiatives into national strategy, shaping the foundations of population policy. PKBI continues to be a key institution for sexual health and reproductive rights in Indonesia—remarkably, one that resists alignment with narrow moral or religious agendas.

25. ——— & ——— West Irian in Moscow & Washington, 1957

The newly appointed Minister for Foreign Affairs, **Subandrio**, embarked on a series of Cold War missions to rally international support for Indonesia's claim over West Irian, navigating between Washington and Moscow while seeking backing from Asian-African states.

26. ——— & ——— The Asian-African Conference of Women, 1958

Kongres Wanita Indonesia (KOWANI, Indonesian Women's Congress) sent **Dr Hurustiati** and **Maria Ulfah** to Colombo where they appealed for West Irian.

27. ——— *Comparative monument (Palestine) (2012)*, see p. 101.

In Melbourne, **Tom Nicholson** (b. 1973) photographed war memorials inscribed with the word “Palestine”—monuments built in the 1920s to honour Australian troops who fought in British campaigns, particularly the 1917 capture of Beersheba.

In Ramallah, Tom re-sited these forms as stacks of posters for people to take and paste across the city. This gesture relocates “Palestine” from stone in Australia back to Palestine itself, unsettling the imperial geographies that tied Australia into Britain’s war machine. The work implicates the echoes of 1917 in the dispossessions of 1948, while also resonating with Aboriginal experiences of land loss. By moving these monuments across places, Nicholson proposes a monument not of permanence but of circulation, solidarity and re-imagination.

28. ——— *The Afro-Asian Writers’ Conference, 1958*

Dr Hurustiati participated in the Tashkent forum.

29. ——— *The 50th International Womens’ Congress, 1960*

Dr Hurustiati participated in the Copenhagen meeting.

30. ——— *Single object (c. 1994–1996) & A piece of memory #1-2 (2012)*,

see p. 57 & 76.

Anusapati (b. 1957) grew up among rows of rubber trees on the outskirts of Jakarta, a landscape erased by highways, factories, and malls. His practice has long been shaped by such memories of trees and their disappearance. Unlike industrial logging, Anusapati works only with fallen wood, off-cuts, or timber at the edge of death, giving it a final life in sculpture.

Single object (c. 1994–1996) was made after Anusapati returned from his studies at the Pratt Institute in New York. Carved from durian wood, the piece takes a rounded form split by a narrow opening, evoking the kentongan (village alarm drums) and the pulse of a living tree. Later works like *A piece of memory #1-2* (2012) transpose wood into bronze, mimicking logs so precisely they confuse permanence with fragility, memory with matter. Through such gestures, Anusapati insists that wood is not merely material but memory, a witness to erased landscapes. His practice stands in stark contrast to extractive logics that reduce forests into commodities, fuelling state revenues and military repression. In every hollowed surface or cast imprint, Anusapati renders absence palpable: the tree that once was, the world that vanishes with it.

31. ——— *The Sukarno Safari, 1961*

On 16 April 1961, President **Sukarno** embarked on a two-month state tour spanning some 19 countries. He visited the so-called Cold War superpowers within one itinerary—the United States, the Soviet Union, and the People’s Republic of China. The “safari” was both a spectacle and a grand diplomatic act that staged Sukarno as a postcolonial leader who moved conveniently between blocs while carrying a single demand: West Irian must return [to Indonesia]!

32. ——— & ——— 1030th Plenary Meeting of the United Nations General Assembly, 1961

Indonesia's Minister of Foreign Affairs **Subandrio** delivered a case for West Irian, framing it as an unfinished project of decolonisation.

33. ——— & ——— A preamble to the New York Agreement, 1962

Having secured US support for Indonesia's position, **Subandrio** led the delegation and signed the New York Agreement—an accord that transferred West Irian from the Dutch to the UN authority, with a future referendum promised.

34. ——— & ——— The 17th session of the United Nations General Assembly, 1962

The "Irian Lady," who began with door-to-door persuasion in Bandung, now stood at the UN podium, leading the Indonesian delegation. **Supeni** presented Indonesia's case for West Irian. At the height of Cold War manoeuvres, she argued Indonesia's position in the world's central diplomatic arena—turning her from Sukarno's envoy into an international figure.

35. ——— Trikora III, c. 1961–1963

Dr Hurustiati sat in the front row on May 1, 1963 at the UNTEA ceremony in Kota Baru. In a photograph, she sits among four women in kebaya, *jarik*, and sunglasses, right next to the stage—visible in archival records yet invisible in the diorama. Her presence indexes the dissonance between lived memory and curated national myth.

She led a group of "Trikora III," consisting of cultural performers tasked with entertaining officers and Indonesia's army in West Irian. The show was first held at Dr Djalal Abdoh's residence and the second in Hamadi, both in Kotabaru (previously Sukarnapura, now Jayapura).

36. ——— The New York Agreement, 1962–1963

On 15 August 1962, **Indonesia and the Netherlands signed the New York Agreement** to resolve the dispute over West Irian. Under this agreement, the United Nations established the United Nations Temporary Executive Authority (UNTEA) as the transitional authority and facilitated the transfer of control over West Irian.

On May 1, 1963, UNTEA formally transferred the administrative responsibilities over West Irian to Indonesia. A ceremony was held in Kotabaru (now Jayapura). On stage, there were CV Narasimhan (UN), Djalal Abdoh (UNTEA), and, from Indonesia, Subandrio (Minister of Foreign Affairs), Sudjarwo Tjondronegoro (representative in West Irian), a bodyguard and a teenage girl wearing kebaya. Also present were bureaucrats, Korps Wanita Angkatan Laut Indonesia (KOWAL, Women Troops of the Navy) and Pakistani troops (UN peacekeeping forces deployed since the UNTEA period).

This performativity marked the end of a long dispute between Indonesia and the Netherlands, decorated with flags, dignitaries, absences and ignorances. Women who sat in the front row, visible in various records—Hurustiati Subandrio, Rusiah Sardjono, Tatiek Azis Saleh, Laksmiharti Tjondronegoro—were never sculpted into the diorama that retells this day. Presence in life, absence in history.

- 37. — The painter Sriyani, 1930–1999**, see p. 106 & 110–113
Moving across the globe, painter **Sriyani** lived a cosmopolitan life. Like Emiria Sunassa, she pursued painting across shifting geographies; like Hurustiati, her husband's diplomatic postings informed her oeuvre. Her trajectory charts not just an artist's career but also how art and diplomacy were entwined in women's lives in mid-20th-century Indonesia.

Sriyani studied at the University of Education Center for Drawing Teachers (now Institut Teknologi Bandung) in 1950. Five years later, she moved to Moscow with her husband, where she continued to paint and exhibit. Not long after, she relocated to The Hague, studying at the Koninklijke Academie van Beeldende Kunsten and showing internationally, including in Cairo (1959). She returned to Jakarta later that year, exhibiting actively until 1961, before another move—this time to Ho Chi Minh City (1962). Her CV notes a visit to West Irian in 1964, though the context is unclear. Dewan Kesenian Jakarta (Jakarta Arts Council) collects her woodcut depicting Papuan figures, titled *Ibu dan anak* (*Mother and child*, 1973).

Between 1965 and 1966 she lived in Dar es Salaam, Nairobi, Kampala, and Paris (1966–1968), before finally resettling in Jakarta. From then until 1999 she exhibited steadily, including a solo exhibition at Taman Ismail Marzuki (1978).

38. - - - - - **Trikora, 1961**

On 19 December 1961 in Yogyakarta, President Sukarno made a political declaration to reclaim West Irian. Dubbed **Trikora** (*Tri Komando Rakyat*, literally Three Commands of the People), it called for the crushing of the Dutch puppet state of Papua, the raising of the Indonesian flag in West Irian and the mobilisation of volunteers.

39. ————— **Komando Mandala, 1962**

Following the declaration of Trikora, the **Komando Mandala** (Mandala Command) was established as its military operation. This joint force of several military commands was based in Makassar and led by Major General Soeharto. From late 1962 to 1964, the operation consisted of three phases: infiltration (troop landings to take control of territory), exploitation (open attacks on Dutch military forces) and consolidation (establishing authority for Indonesia).

40. - - - - - **TNI AD ♥ USA, 1950s–1960s**

Indonesian Army (TNI Angkatan Darat) officers travelled to the United States for training through the **US Military Assistance Program**. Amongst them were Ahmad Yani at the Command and General Staff College (1955) and Sarwo Edhie Wibowo at the Infantry Officers Advanced Course (1957). These journeys embedded doctrines of “professionalism” and anti-communism, while cultivating networks with US counterparts. What returned to Jakarta was more than military technique: a Cold War alignment that empowered A. H. Nasution, and later Soeharto, to consolidate the army’s role in politics.

41. 📜 **Supersemar, 1966**

The Order of Eleventh March (Surat Perintah 11 Maret, colloquially: Supersemar) was Soeharto’s licence to seize power from President Sukarno, ban the Communist Party of Indonesia (PKI) and launch mass arrests that paved the way for the 1965–1966 US-backed genocide. Its origins remain disputed—drafted freely or under duress remains unknown.

Now over 50 years old, this mysterious letter has yet to surface in its original version. The National Archives holds three different versions of the letter, fuelling decades of controversy.

42. ★ **1966 (2019)**, see p. 103.

This installation by **Uji Handoko Eko Saputro** (b. 1983) is structured like a church ritual—confessing, reflecting. It is an opportunity to confront the Supersemar. We are asked to kneel, to place our hands on its desk, to follow a certain ritual, and, eventually, to say something in the set-up. Instead of a priest, we face ourselves in a mirror—an echo of the mirror and painting in Soeharto’s room in the 1966 Supersemar diorama. The ritual ends with the churn of a dot-matrix printer: four copies of the diorama sketch are produced, yet the “original” remains blank, with only the carbon copies faintly showing the image. Here, absence, repetition and reflection bind into one gesture: complicity.

43. — Polyethylene (resin): from block, to pour, 1960s & 2020s

In the 1960s, when Indonesia began sculpting its official past into the dioramas at Museum Monas, the figures were carved from solid polyurethane blocks, likely imported from Japan through postwar reparations and state cultural cooperation. The material arrived rigid and unfamiliar—industrial plastic in block form, carved like stone.

Today, sixty years later, we use something else: liquid resin, poured by hand into silicone moulds from clay figures we model ourselves. It is cheaper, more toxic, more available—mostly imported from China, sold in jerrycans, repackaged locally thanks to “creative economies” encouraged by online shopping. What once arrived through Cold War reconstruction now circulates via global manufacturing routes shaped by 21st-century logistics and soft empire. From Japan to China, the resin still comes from elsewhere.

The histories these figures embody are not clean. They carry distortions, omissions and state fictions. But instead of erasing them—violently, bureaucratically—we choose to face them. We remake the figures to remake our relation to them. This is not reproduction. It is a form of reckoning. It is conservation from the people, by the people, for the people: slow, flawed and deliberate. In resin, we hold on to history—not to preserve its version, but to expose it, cast by cast.

FILM

BOOK

PROGRAMME

When the flood is over: No. 44

Din din

[Screening and discusson] **Sesuatu yang nyata,
sesuatu yang diabaikan** (That is real, that is ignored)

[Music festival] **Sonic Shaman 2026: *Borderless***

[Loka-loka] **Alkisah...** (Once upon a time)



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Griya Seni Hj. Kustiyah Edhi Sunarso,
Hyphen—, Tom Nicholson with
Ary “Jimged” Sendy, Aufa Ariaputra,
Nasikin Ahmad, Omar Aryarindra &
Munadi Alianto (Xonad)

When the flood is over: No. 44
2025

[...] HD video, colour, sound, 60' 02" [...]

Collection of the artists

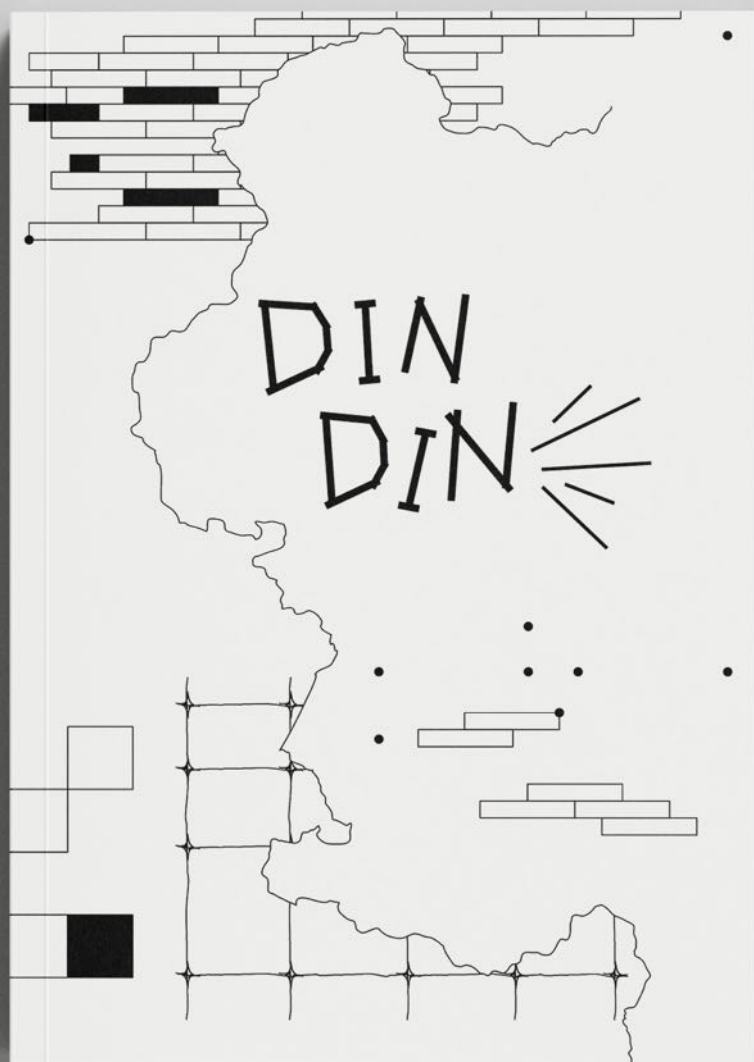


In a quiet corner of the National History Museum (Museum Monas), an elderly woman reflects on her life journey, linking her personal history with that of the nation. From her experience attending the 1963 West Irian Liberation ceremony to the stories of women diplomats like Dr Hurustiati and Supeni Pudjobuntoro, as well as the contributions of overlooked artists and civilians, offer a perspective that is both intimate and historical.

Through her story, we trace the Asian-African Conference, the role of women in diplomacy, and the seldom-recorded stories that fall outside official archives. Her voice, shifting between nostalgia, critique, and gentle admonition to the younger generation, reminds us that history is a living space constantly contested—never fully captured by books or dioramas.

The film then turns to a community-led conservation effort centered on diorama no. 44 "Liberation of Irian Jaya, 1 May 1963". Here, history becomes tangible and alive: a group of civilians care for, replicate, and repaint the miniature figures, turning the act of care into a way of preserving memory. What was once a static diorama now becomes a site of reflection, discussion, and shared responsibility.

By weaving together personal memories and collective history, the film highlights the tension between memory and monument, past and present, personal experience and national narrative. It is at once a meditation on historical consciousness and the practice of shared care, while asking: how do we remember, what do we preserve, and who has the right to tell history?



This publication collects thoughts, works, and excerpted conversations with multidisciplinary practitioners engaging in strategies, models, and visualisations on decolonisation. This compilation stems from two interrelated events during Riksa Afiaty's 2019 residency at Jan van Eyck: the talk series *Padat Merayap* (literally: congestion, co-developed with Karoline Swiezynski) and the exhibition *Mastertools*. Together, both are forming a field where discursive, curatorial, and artistic practices intersect.

The *Padat Merayap* chapter gathers transcriptions and texts that extend the conversations. It treats decoloniality as an analytical stance grounded in speculative thinking, interrogating how it is framed within and against colonial institutions, their power structures, and knowledge infrastructures such as archives and collections. It also examines the circulation of concepts across art and culture, and the roles of artists, curators, and scholars in articulating these debates, while leaving open questions of what decolonisation means.

Meanwhile, the *Mastertools* chapter shifted the focus toward material and object-based inquiries through the exhibited works documentation. It traces systems of classification from early scientific and colonial expeditions to contemporary archives, showing how they construct representations of 'the other'. Reconsidered through (de)colonial perspectives, these tools reveal shifting power relations. The artists rework and re-appropriate them through objects and installations.

Across both chapters, decoloniality functions as a critical position for navigating institutions, archives, and lived experience, while reframing "din din"—sound of car horns amid Jakarta's traffic congestion—as a condition that shapes how knowledge, histories, and futures are produced and contested.

CONTRIBUTORS

Catarina Simão is an artist-researcher who explores the archive as a mechanism for producing, organizing, and deferring knowledge, engaging to Mozambique's colonial and anti-colonial history.

Charles Esche is a curator and writer whose practice focuses on shifting art materials and contexts toward a sustained practice of engagement with decolonial perspectives.

Claudia Martínez Garay is an artist exploring how history circulates materially through the appropriation and transformation of pre-Columbian objects.

Ferdiansyah Thajib is a social and cultural anthropologist working on psychological anthropology, gender, and sexuality studies.

Harm Stevens is curator and historian at the Rijksmuseum's 20th-century Art Department, specializing in colonial history and Dutch post-war counterculture.

Ilya Fedotov-Fedorov is a New York-based interdisciplinary artist engaging with queerness, human ecology, and bodily metamorphosis through bioengineering and philology.

Gökcan Demirkazık is an itinerant curator, writer, and editor involved in research and spatial reconfiguration of independent art spaces.

Köken Ergun is an artist working with film and installation, which often deal with ritual, community, and lesser-known social groups.

Marjolein van Pagee is a writer and historian focusing on Dutch colonial history in Indonesia and founder of Histori Bersama.

Michelle Wun Ting Wong is a researcher who also writes and curates. Her work focuses on Hong Kong art history, artistic modernism, and archival practices.

Oesman Effendi was a painter, writer, lecturer, and critic who was active during the transitional period from Dutch and Japanese colonial rule to Indonesian independence.

Patrick D. Flores is curator, lecturer, and writer working on Southeast Asian art history and curatorial practice.

Post-Museum is an independent cultural and social space in Singapore promoting critical engagement with contemporary life and community practice.

Roy Villevoeye is an artist working across photography, painting, sculpture, and film, exploring memory, coexistence, and Asmat (Papua) relations with the Netherlands.

They Are Here is a London-based collaborative practice led by Helen Walker and Harun Morrison, creating context-specific games that form temporary communities and alternative modes of engagement.

Timoteus Anggawan Kusno is an artist-filmmaker working across cinema, installation, and moving-image environments, who explores Indonesian historical afterlives through dream, memory, and fiction.



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Julian Abraham “Togar” & Oni Imelva

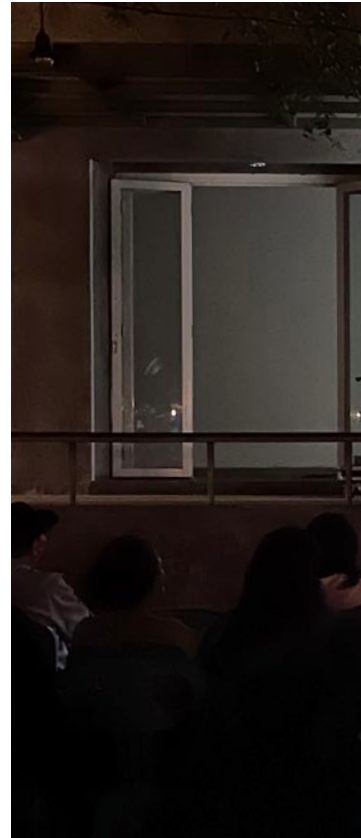
Sesuatu yang nyata, sesuatu yang diabaikan (That is real, that is ignored)

Series of movie screenings and a live performance

RUBANAH Underground Hub, Jakarta

November 2, 2025

The film was screened daily at RUBANAH Underground Hub, Jakarta—one of the sites of *Figures, dedications, and civilisations*. On November 2, 2025, the screening was accompanied by a public discussion featuring Togar, Oni, and Grace Samboh, makingspace for shared conversations around the work and its resonances.





Kiniko Art Space – SaRanG Building 2, Yogyakarta
January 18, 2026

Held together with Forum Film Dokumenter, Kiniko Art Space, SaRanG Art + Books, and Hyphen—, this screening was followed by a discussion session with Mirisa Hasfaria and Nya Ina Raseuki (Ubiet).

Mirisa Hasfaria is a researcher and is active in advocacy work for gender equality and social justice. A recipient of the Fulbright Tsunami Relief Initiative Scholarship, she earned her Master's degree from the University of Arkansas. Mirisa was previously involved with the Rehabilitation and Reconstruction Agency (BRR) for NAD–Nias (2006–2009). She is currently also active as a contributor to alternative media platforms such as *Konde.co* and *Magdalene*.

Nya Ina Raseuki, familiarly known as Ubiet, is a vocalist, improviser, composer, and ethnomusicologist with a focus on the exploration of vocals and songs from Nusantara. She pursued her studies at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, United States, where she earned a Master of Music degree and a Ph.D. in Ethnomusicology. Ubiet currently teaches at the Graduate School of the Jakarta Institute of the Arts (IKJ).



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► •|||• • **Sonic Shaman 2026: *Borderless*** •|||• •◀

Singapore Art Museum, Tanjong Pagar Distripark, Singapore
January 25, 2026

As part of the music festival Sonic Shaman 2026: *Borderless* in collaboration with TheCube Project Space (Taipei) held in Singapore Art Museum, Togar and Oni begin with sound: unruly, unbound, and plural.

Oni, who brings her voice, memory, and experience from Aceh, brings together sonic gestures across geographies and temporalities into this live jam with Togar. Between percussion and voice, hikayat becomes both method and resistance: a way to listen where the state forgets, and to remember where history falters. Part ritual, part assembly, this session is a jam in the truest sense: a space of contact, refusal, listening, and co-presence.

Tied to *Figures, dedications, and civilisations*, this performance doesn't aim to illustrate history, but to unmoor it—to make it vibrate. Sound becomes a sculptural medium in itself: temporal, spatial, political.



ALKISAH ... [ONCE UPON A TIME...]



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Once upon a time... is a podcast series emerging from a storytelling workshop—about and around an exhibition, organized by Hyphen—.

This time, the programme is held in conjunction with *Figures, dedications, and civilisations*, a presentation by Hyphen— as part of the Singapore Biennale 2025: *pure intention* at the Singapore Art Museum.

Held on November 8 & 22; December 20, 2025; and January 7, 2026, participants of the workshop developed podcast episodes that reflect how they saw, heard, and experienced the Singapore Biennale exhibition located at the Gallery 1 of Singapore Art Museum, and how they interpreted those encounters.



Sound mixing by Aji Asfani.
All podcasts of this series are in English.



THE STORYTELLERS

Eugenia Tan is a multi-disciplinary writer based in Singapore. She has experience in various written forms including poetry, prose, translation and playwriting. Her poems and essays are published widely, while her plays have been staged under various presentation platforms. She begins her masters in Creative Writing in August.

Marliini Heikkonen is a Finnish-Singaporean writer. She recently earned her Bachelor of Arts in History and Philosophy, where she studied across NUS, Princeton, and Oxford. Marliini writes about the perennial intrigue that surrounds heritage, belonging and becoming—obsessions that drive both her academic and creative work. Read more of her work at marliini.substack.com

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Masuri Mazlan works across sculpture, found objects, and photography, moving between hardness and softness, control and vulnerability. His practice transforms industrial materials into speculative objects of intimacy and memory. He was commissioned by Singapore Art Museum for the 2025 SAM Contemporaries biennale.

Nicole Bruma is an aspiring wordsmith and video essayist who's kinda, sorta getting there with words. With a keen interest in poetry, art analysis and acting, they involve themselves in numerous artistic pursuits that advocate for community, care and creative expression. The Layers of Titarubi's Nutmeg is their first published work.

Tricia Sin is a student, writer, and perpetually curious person. Her recent hobbies include binge watching cooking shows and visiting museums. Apart from this she enjoys collecting other families' recipes. If you have an interesting one, please message her on Instagram @triciassin.

Ulfah Irdina Binte Affandi is based in Singapore and her interests comprise of writing about her personal day to day observations. She was trained in Sociology as an undergraduate at the National University of Singapore.

Valentina Conchie is a Singapore-based artist working across painting, photography, collage and moving image. Drawing on memories, dreams, folklore and pop culture, Valentina's work explores the mythologies of contemporary female life, transforming personal experiences into symbolic visual narratives that reflect shared human emotions, identity and collective experience.

Wee Yi Li Grace is an emerging writer and museum professional in Singapore. Her works spans creative non-fiction awarded at the NUS Libraries Writers' Centre Literary Awards (2024), short stories in dialogue with the collection of the NUS Museum (2025) and curatorial essays for the Modern Art Society Singapore (2026). Her practice is grounded in ecocriticism, ekphrasis, and a touch of magical realism.

BIOGRAPHIES

Figures, dedications, and civilisations

Anusapati (b. 1957, Surakarta) works with found and fallen wood, bamboo, and remnants of architecture. His sculptural practice meditates on memory, material, and ecology—transforming discarded matter into forms that recall the pulse of living trees. His works have been shown at UP Museum, Manila (2019), Jakarta Biennale (2021), and National Gallery Singapore (2024).

Ary "Jimged" Sendy (b. 1978, Jakarta) works across photography, video, and installation to uncover suppressed or manipulated histories that shape collective memory. His practice probes the politics of narration and the afterlives of authoritarianism. Recent exhibitions include *documenta fifteen* (2022), Jakarta Biennale (2021), and Asian Art Biennial, Taichung (2024).

Aufa Ariaputra (b. 1982, Jakarta) is a sound recordist whose practice bridges the tangible and the invisible. For him, sound is spirit and archive—alive in every body and landscape. Beyond film work, he collaborates widely across music and art projects, sharing his belief that every sound carries memory and meaning.

Emiria Sunassa (b. 1894, Tanahwangko; d. 1964, Lampung) was a pioneering painter from Indonesia. Largely self-taught, she depicted everyday scenes of people from varied ethnic groups across the archipelago with a familiar, non-exoticizing gaze. Her work reflected a cosmopolitan outlook and camaraderie with minority communities during Indonesia's formative postcolonial years.

Griya Seni Hj. Kustiyah Edhi Sunarso (est. 2015) houses hundreds of artworks as well as thousands of photographs and documents belonging to the sculptor Edhi Sunarso (1932–2016) and painter Kustiyah (1935–2012). Today, it is jointly managed by their children and grandchildren. It can be visited by prior arrangement.

Hyphen— (est. 2011) is a research initiative that puts forward curiosity and common wellbeing as the estuary of artistic practices. They are Ratna Mufida, Pitra Hutomo, Grace Samboh, Akmalia Rizqita "Chita", Rachel K. Surijata, Ruhaeni Intan, and Andri Setiawan.

Julia Sarisetiati (b. 1981, Jakarta) is an artist and curator whose practice explores migration, labor, and sustainability, with growing attention to regenerative methods. A member of ruangrupa and co-initiator of Gudskul, she was part of documenta fifteen's artistic team and continues to develop inter-local collective and digital platforms like lumbung.space.

Julian Abraham “Togar” (b. 1987, Medan) can be an artist, musician, and pseudo-scientist. Words like generative, manipulating, and dematerialisation are often used to identify his work. Connecting one thing to another, through complex algorithms, he explores how art, environment, science, and technology can educate and engage both artist and society.

Kinez Riza (b. 1989, Jakarta) explores representations of reality through nature, time, and the sublime. Working with photography, film, and found objects, she bridges art and science to question accepted truths. Her practice often unfolds through artist-led expeditions that probe the boundaries between observation, belief, and knowledge.

Nasikin Ahmad (b. 1993, Tulungagung) is a sculptor whose practice emerges from tumpangsari—an intercropping culture of coexistence. Witnessing its shift toward industrial monoculture, he turns to clay and other materials to explore the tensions between nature and modernity, where “pests” and new creatures mark the afterlives of agriculture.

Omar Aryarindra (b. 1982, Bandung) is a producer and director whose work spans animation, film, & digital media. A graduate of Institut Kesenian Jakarta, he directed Adit Sopo Jarwo (nominated for Best Animation, FFI 2016) & has produced films incl. *Melukis luka*, *Kamu adalah aku*, and *Tamu tak diundang*.

Oni Imelva (b. 1981, Banda Aceh) is a traditional epic narrator, singer, social worker, and human rights advocate from Aceh. Currently Vice Chair of the Aceh Truth and Reconciliation Commission (2022–2027), she brings deep knowledge of oral tradition, grief, and survival—especially in the wake of the 2004 tsunami—into poetic and civic action.

Presiden Tidore (b. 1991, Tidore) is a hip-hop artist, researcher, and textile collector whose practice bridges sound, cloth, and sovereignty. His album *Hikayat Moloku kie raha* (2024) and weaving projects revive various inherited techniques and island networks, turning each performance and textile into acts of cultural diplomacy—asserting memory, visibility, and periphery.

Riksa Afiaty (b. 1986, Bandung) is an artworker whose practice examines how archives, institutions, and exhibitions reproduce or resist colonial legacies. Besides her efforts to contemplate decoloniality in artistic practice and curatorial framework, her interest in the struggle for liberation in West Papua guides a lot of her work.

Sriyani (b. 1930, Yogyakarta; d. 2006, Jakarta) was a painter who studied fine art at what is now the Bandung Institute of Technology in 1950. Throughout her life, she travelled, painted, and exhibited internationally, from Thailand to Russia—and is best remembered for her black-and-white paintings and monotype prints.

Titarubi (b. 1968, Bandung) is an artist whose works often address issues of humanity, particularly in relation to the history of national development. Seeing art as a way to gain knowledge, she continually revisits questions from the past—reflecting on experience, memory, and the possibility of understanding life through making.

Tom Nicholson (b. 1973, Naarm) is an artist who lives in Naarm/Melbourne. Trained in drawing—a system of traces and a way of imagining unrealised ideas—his projects encompass monuments and counter-monuments, photography, writing, posters, mosaics, books, stained glass, and charcoal drawings.

Uji Handoko Eko Saputro (b. 1983, Kebumen) explores the ongoing tension between “high” and “low” art. Blurring realism with decoration, his works merge urban and agrarian, local and global sensibilities. Drawing from comics, film, music, and street culture, Hahan creates bold, chaotic, and vividly dynamic visual worlds.

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